

**Strength-based interventions in secondary schools: How can they be most helpful
for pupils at-risk and not-at-risk of exclusion?**

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Declaration

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own and has been generated as the result of my own original research.

No material contained in this thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.

Abstract

Research in the field of positive psychology for children and young people has accumulated, and evidence shows that strength-based interventions can be beneficial in terms of wellbeing and school life outcomes. However, populations which are at higher risk of being excluded from school have not been adequately represented in the literature.

The study is designed to address two significant areas. Firstly, it aspires to define the effectiveness of strength-based techniques for adolescents, including those who are at risk of school exclusion. Secondly, it aims to clarify how to improve professional practice for educational psychologists (EPs) and educators when using these approaches. For the purposes of the study, a mixed methods approach was adopted and a strength-based intervention programme was implemented in three secondary schools of one Local Authority.

Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data about the effect of the intervention and ascertain potential areas of improvement. The findings reveal that although the intervention did not result in statistically significant improvements, pupils at risk of exclusion (AROE) seemed to have been affected more than pupils not AROE.

Using Thematic Analysis, participants' and facilitators' views were captured into themes, which revealed that self-concept, social skills and strengths development were enhanced through the programme. In addition, this analysis highlighted the different components that contributed to helpful and unhelpful practice. The study offers knowledge and perspectives in terms of school applications for supporting pupils AROE and not AROE, and canvasses strategies that can be embedded within the school curriculum in order to inspire educators working with vulnerable populations. Conclusions and recommendations about professional practice are also presented.

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List of abbreviations

ANOVA	Analysis Of Variance
AROE	At Risk Of Exclusion
BIP	Behaviour Improvement Programme
BPS	British Psychological Society
CBT	Cognitive Behaviour Therapy
CSF	Clifton Strengths Finder
DCFS	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education
DFEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
IR	Inclusion Room
LA	Local Authority
PCP	Personal Construct Psychology
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
PSHCE	Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education
SEBD	Social, Emotional and Behaviour Difficulties
SEN	Special Educational Needs
TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologist
ToL	Tree of Life
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
VIA	Values in Action

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and overview

It is essential to provide a framework for the current thesis by briefly presenting the two principle areas this research is built upon. Firstly, a personal interest and commitment to positive psychology has influenced the author's practice and, inevitably, the current research. The author felt the necessity to move away from fundamental assumptions about the "rotten core" of the psychodynamic model (Linley & Joseph, 2004; p. 714). This novel viewpoint is reflected by a focus on "what works" and a belief that working with positives can bring helpful results to all individuals (de Shazer, Donal, Korman, Trepper, McCollum & Berg, 2006). Secondly, having worked with vulnerable and behaviourally challenging individuals in the past, it was felt that there is room for improvement in terms of professionals' practice for this population. Specifically, previous interaction with pupils excluded from school instilled the author with a desire to overcome the factors that contributed to this outcome. As a result, a drive to overcome problems of social cohesion, which are deeply rooted within education, became eminent. This determination to eradicate inequality led to the decision to work with pupils at risk of exclusion (AROE), as soon as their difficulties arise.

The author has had multiple roles in this study, namely: researcher, practitioner psychologist and interviewer. Without a doubt, the current research is a co-construction of an understanding of what was taking place for the participants at that point in time.

This thesis is the result of a three-year research journey. The author's professional and academic background played a major role in the design of and positioning within this study. By and large, being a trainee educational psychologist in the final year of training has contributed to the realisation that the EP profession is an ever-changing and evolving workforce, where research and national priorities influence practice to improve services. Within this framework, the author aimed to challenge existing habits of working. This was instigated by literature highlighting that instead of relying merely on personal knowledge and experience, Educational Psychology is guided by scientific research to ensure good practice (Woolfson, 2011). Further, the author's perception of

the profession, whereby the EP is seen as a scientist-practitioner who values the importance of evidence-based practice both in the context of professional practice and in terms of local authority and public sector policy, was of critical importance,. As such, selecting a particular approach involves “the EP’s expertise in a particular area, based on the evidence that they can provide showing successful practice” (Fox, 2011; p. 333). Therefore, the author felt that it is necessary to contribute to the toolbox of EP practice, which continues to be expanded.

The following sections of this chapter present short introductions to the key underpinning areas of this study.

1.2 The value of education

The importance of educating children and young people is valued across virtually all cultures. A multitude of legislative documents outlining the importance of equality in accessing education has amassed. Education is considered a fundamental human right and nations have historically taken steps to ensure pupils have a broad, balanced and stimulating programme of learning. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was issued by the United Nations (1989) as a result of a worldwide decision of governments to issue a human rights treaty, clarifying what children need to live a happy life and fulfil their potential. It was ratified by the UK government in 1991 and became UK law in 1992 (Office of the Children’s Commissioner, 2013). Through this treaty, nations are committed to protecting the rights of children, putting the child’s best interest at the heart. In terms of education, the UNCRC states that all children have the same rights for education, regardless of their ethnicity, gender, religion or ability. Personal development is a priority and it is essential for nations to listen to and act upon children’s views. The right for education is further associated with behaviour management, which should be respectful of children’s dignity, and personal development needs to be a priority.

The importance of inclusive education was introduced into the legislative and nationwide realm through the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), a world framework for special educational needs which was signed by 92 countries. UNESCO ensured that governments were committed to inclusive practices from schools and professionals. Inclusion was seen as an equitable and participatory approach to

education for all children regardless of their needs. This includes removing barriers to learning and development for all individuals to make progress. More recently, the Equality Act (2010) became a cornerstone of educational practice and promoted equal opportunities. Situations where inequality may arise, as a result of discrimination and prejudice, were highlighted and risk factors for specific groups were presented. Equal opportunities were viewed as the underpinning of a fair educational system for pupils from diverse backgrounds.

Evidence from recent literature suggest that it is paramount for schools and local authorities (LAs) to help overcome obstacles related to children's engagement with education, in order to ensure learning and good behaviour. Schools can make a difference to children's wellbeing by supporting them to become confident individuals and by providing a safe environment for pupils who experience difficulties at home (Munn, Lloyd & Cullen, 2000). However, schools alone do not have the power to support all the needs of challenging populations (Parsons, 1999). Multi-agency work can be highly beneficial in diminishing some of the most significant barriers and risk factors (Arnold, Yeomans & Simpson, 2009). Professionals working with pupils should identify difficulties and intervene early, using a variety of strategies to reduce the factors that contribute to challenging behaviour and exclusion (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008). Lastly, inclusion and equality in education entails that pupils' needs are addressed within a broad educational system (Lindsay, 2007).

1.3 School exclusions: What and why?

The literature however suggests that this vision of equality and inclusion is far from the reality for many pupils in the UK who are not included in mainstream schooling. Despite significant improvements in the area of school exclusion since the academic year 1995/1996, a noteworthy percentage of the school population still gets excluded on a short or long term basis (DfE, 2012a). The most recent rates for these types of exclusions are 6.75% and 0.12% respectively (DfE, 2014a). The Government's interest and concern in the issue is reflected by the plethora of recent guidelines that have been released and are pertinent to exclusions (DCSF, 2008; DfE, 2012a; DfE 2012b; DfE, 2013b).

Exclusions can be seen as a means of social control via separating the individual from the group or setting (Arnold, Yeomans & Simpson, 2009) and are used as a disciplinary method for pupils who display ‘unacceptable’ behaviour (Hayden, 2003). In practice, exclusion is a sanction that prevents a pupil attending school and this decision can be made by the school headteacher only (DfE, 2012b).

There are two official types of exclusions, namely permanent and fixed period exclusions, which differ in terms of length of time and enrolment. As outlined by the DfE (2012a), a pupil who is permanently excluded has his or her name removed from the school register and is not allowed to return to the same setting. In fixed term exclusions, the pupil is temporarily removed from the school setting and is expected to return after the completion of the exclusion period. In this case, the pupil’s name remains in the school register. Furthermore, fixed term exclusions should not exceed a total of 45 days per academic year and 15 days per academic term as opposed to permanent exclusions. A permanent exclusion involves a change in the educational provision and the Local Authority (LA) arranges for alternative education (DCSF, 2009). Apart from these official exclusion types, ‘unofficial’ or ‘hidden’ exclusions can take place while the school investigates, plans or negotiates before further decisions are made for the student (Hayden, 2003). Despite specific government guidelines relevant to unofficial exclusions (DCSF, 2008), they are considered very difficult to monitor and it is hard to estimate their magnitude (Kyriacou, 2003).

1.4 The role of the educational psychologist

Educational Psychologists (EPs) work across various contexts and perform numerous functions in the educational milieu by liaising closely with schools, usually through LAs (Fallon, Woods & Rooney, 2010). As stated by the British Psychological Society (2002a), EPs work to promote the development of children and young people to ensure positive outcomes. This involves working in integrated ways and through the child’s support network.

EPs have increasingly focused on designing, implementing and evaluating intervention programmes for children and young people (Tummer, Chapman, Greaney & Prochnow, 2002) and are considered a vital resource for intervention work (Farrell, et al., 2006). Having a high level of understanding of social and emotional issues in conjunction with their access to information from various sources, EPs are enabled to

work with children and young people while simultaneously being considered more suitable to provide interventions in comparison to other psychology disciplines (Atkinson, Corban & Templeton, 2011).

Scientific research is key to ensuring good EP practice, instead of relying merely on personal knowledge and experience (Woolfson, 2011). Moreover, in an era of constant and rapid change, EPs should be able to adapt and find novel ways forward in order to synchronise the profession with new advances (Gersch, 2009). A vital resource for feedback and further development is the views of the child, as well as that of key adults around the individual (Gersch, 2004). Evaluation of educational programmes, interventions and provision should incorporate their views and take them into account if meaningful action is to be taken.

In terms of inclusive practice, EPs have clear priorities and commitments, which stem from BPS guidelines (2002b). These include minimising segregation and exclusion of learners for reasons of ethnicity, language or disability and ensuring meaningful learning for vulnerable pupils. EPs make sure all learners participate in the learning process and they also contribute to the development of policies and practice guidelines that promote diversity, to cater for a wide range of learning needs.

1.5 A positive psychology perspective

Positive psychology is the theoretical background for the current study and has guided each stage of the research. The core principle of positive psychology is heavily orientated towards people's strengths rather than their weaknesses and towards competency building rather than pathology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Essentially, the emphasis on the medical model meant that professionals working in education and mental health tended to neglect all the things that work well in a person's life and merely focused on problems.

Instead, positive psychology advances the notion that by focusing on positives, prevention and treatment of psychological difficulties can be more effective (Cowen & Kilmer, 2002). As such, it intends to supplement existing theory and practice with this new perspective. Although positive psychology research with children and young people is still in its infancy, it has attracted considerable interest in recent decades and has produced valuable findings (Huebner, Gilman & Furlong, 2009). In terms of

education, the uppermost aim is to promote ‘flourishing’, a term which is used to describe the optimal functioning of people (Gable & Haidt, 2005); schools are perceived as the most suitable environment to promote this and enhance positive mental health in children and young people (Norrish, Williams, O’Connor & Robinson, 2013). In addition, positive psychology emphasizes the importance of teaching wellbeing as it ‘*is synergistic with better learning*’ (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich & Linkins, 2009; p.294).

Extensive systematic work in the field of positive psychology applications did not take place until the revolutionary speech of Martin Seligman on the first day of his presidency in the American Psychological Association in 1998. As cited by Dodge, Daly, Huyton and Sanders (2012), he then first expressed the view that psychology was only ‘half-baked’. In other words, the focus was mainly placed on how to eliminate deficits and nullify difficulties, but it was not necessarily encouraging happiness and wellbeing. A gradual shift was observed ever since and the deficit view was balanced by a perception that all individuals have sets of resources which can be related to their innate virtues or their potential for change (Lerner, 2009). Even the most troubled individuals were believed to have significant strengths, talents and skills that can be harnessed to promote recovery and development.

Research in relation to strength-based development seems to have accumulated in the last two decades. Multiple benefits have been reported for children and young people, with the majority of the evidence indicating an improvement in wellbeing and problem solving skills (Rashid et al. 2013). Moreover, psychological resilience and the ability to develop normally despite adversity are thought to be associated with individual assets and innate resources (Yates and Masten, 2004; Padesky & Mooney, 2012).

Positive psychology and strength-based applications can relate to a wider range of areas including policy making, practice methods, individual interventions and strategies that use the strengths of individuals, families and communities (Yates & Masten, 2004). This approach perceives each child and family’s unique set of strengths as the tool for development and wellbeing, while adopting an unconventional point of view that uses strengths in order to fully involve the participants in the changing process. Interestingly, recent research in the UK places great emphasis on school applications of positive psychology by using various programmes to promote wellbeing

and everyday school life (Proctor et al., 2011; Bozic, 2013; German, 2013; Hughes, 2013).

1.6 Research purpose

The present research endeavours to make contributions on a theoretical and practical level as to how strength-based interventions can affect the wellbeing of secondary pupils, including those AROE, and lead to multiple potential benefits. Prior knowledge in these two areas highlighted that a study to discover if and how pupils AROE can benefit from a positive psychology approach in UK schools had yet to be conducted. Within this, relatively unexplored, positive psychology framework, the aim is to promote education and inclusion for all. As such, this study aspires to inform practice, while promoting collaboration between external agencies and school staff. It is envisaged that there will be multiple benefits for the individuals participating and the findings will lead to new and improved techniques for professionals to use. Furthermore, the study is positioned in a manner that creates an avenue for hearing the voice of pupils, particularly these vulnerable populations, and formulates practice based on their opinions. This will hopefully strengthen this population and develop their confidence.

The study will also try to redress challenges that adolescents encounter in the dimensions of both personal and educational life. Above all, the proposed study aims to minimise exclusions and the factors contributing to them, which will help the most vulnerable pupils to follow new paths and ensure a better future for them. In congruence with positive psychology principles, individuals who are not experiencing difficulties can also benefit from approaches that promote their wellbeing and this notion motivated the researcher to include participants who have traditionally raised no concerns. To sum up, the proposed research is designed to address two significant areas; firstly, to explore the effectiveness of a positive psychology programme for young people, and secondly to clarify how to improve professional practice when using these approaches. More broadly, this research aims to invite a discussion on what strength-based techniques can or could achieve in the field of secondary schools and school exclusions.

1.7 Overview of the chapter

This chapter aimed to provide background and contextual information in relation to the broader aims and basic principles of this study. As such, the importance of education and the philosophical underpinnings of positive psychology were discussed. In addition, the chapter outlined the political framework of school exclusions and educational psychology practice within the UK, whilst linking this with the research aims.

1.8 Overview of the following chapters

In chapter 2, the author addresses the two key topics of this research. Section 2.2 examines positive psychology roots and principles, while presenting an overview of the evidence base for strength-based interventions. This is followed by a thorough examination of the prevalence of school exclusions prevalence and the political context (2.3). Possible detrimental consequences of excluding pupils are also reviewed and the final section is concerned with the research amassed and theoretical perspectives in relation to reducing and understanding exclusions.

The purpose of chapter 3 is to elaborate on the methodological approaches employed in the current study. The research questions (3.2) and the underpinning theoretical perspectives are presented (3.3), followed by information about the participants (3.4) and ethical considerations pertinent to the study (3.5). Sections 3.6 and 3.7 outline the quantitative and qualitative methodological techniques and details of the intervention programme respectively. The author then demonstrates the processes adopted for data analysis (3.9).

Chapter 4 includes the findings as they were generated from the data analysis. In terms of the quantitative findings, the author presents the findings from each statistical analysis (4.2). The qualitative analysis (4.3) concerns the themes and subthemes that stemmed from Thematic Analysis.

Finally, chapter 5 examines links between the findings and the existing literature. For this reason, the research questions are addressed (5.3) and the findings are discussed through a systemic theory lens (5.4). The author also considers reflexivity and reflection issues (5.5), and draws conclusions for professional practice (5.6 and 5.7).

Finally, the study's methodological and theoretical foundations are critiqued (5.8) and recommendations for future researchers are offered (5.9).

2 Literature review

2.1 Introduction to chapter

This chapter explores a wide range of materials on which the thesis has drawn and aims to define and refine the area under examination by contextualising the current study within the positive psychology paradigm and by clarifying the school exclusions social, political and legislative entourage. Emphasis is placed on educational practice and school implementation by critically reviewing the evidence base relevant to strength-based interventions and the practices used to minimise exclusions.

2.2 Positive psychology

2.2.1 Positive psychology roots and principles

The value of ‘good character development’ for children and young people, and the accompanying happiness this may bring, have permeated virtually all societies throughout the years (Proctor, 2013). Educators as well as parents have historically acknowledged good character as an important goal for eudaimonia. The word eudaimonia means prosperity or being in a state of true happiness (Collins Greek Dictionary, 2009), but in *Nicomachean Ethics* (Sachs, 2002), Aristotle would explain it as the final goal of the human life, and as an action of life according to virtue. As early as 330BC, the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle gave voice to the importance of fostering a virtuous life. More recent explanations of the term include positive wellbeing (Wood & Joseph, 2010), happiness (Carr, 2011; Kristjánsson, 2012), developing one’s potential to the fullest (Compton & Hoffman, 2012) and fulfilling one’s true nature or finding one’s true self (Ryan & Deci, 2001). However, for Aristotle the notion of eudaimonia was predominantly an ongoing process rather than a state, which leads to a happy life. By contrast, hedonism was seen as the search for pleasures, enjoyment, and the desire to avoid negative emotions (Kashdan, Biswas-Diener & King, 2008). In addition to Aristotle’s concept of eudaimonia, Socrates assumed that all humans pursue happiness, and that this can be achieved through wisdom and virtue (Rudebusch, 1999).

Similarly, 20th century psychological theories have highlighted the importance of fulfilling one's potential as the means for contentment and prosperity in life. Maslow's humanistic theory (Maslow, 1970) suggested that the uppermost human achievement in the hierarchy of needs theory is self-actualisation, which in essence can be achieved when a person pursues what he or she is born to do. While Maslow did not refer to strengths nomenclature, he did recognise that self-actualisation signified that the individual would be able to utilise personal strengths and virtues. Self-Determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) is also linked to the ideas of self-actualisation and eudaimonia as the core for defining wellbeing. This theory is based on one of the fundamental premises of humanism, which maintains that optimal human functioning is the key element for wellbeing (Vazquez, Hervas, Rahona, Gomez, 2009)

Positive psychology is defined as the study of positive human functioning (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and of what works well in a human's life (Peterson, 2006) by focusing on those things that make life worth living and suggesting that life is more than avoiding problems. Positive psychologists promote optimal human functioning, and focus on human thriving and flourishing (Norris & Vella-Brodrick, 2009). In terms of psychological practice, positive psychology recognises that good things as well as bad things are present in life and therefore, professionals should devote their interest and time to both areas. Overall, psychological theory, research and interventions are used to understand humans' positive, adaptive, creative and fulfilling traits (Compton, 2005).

Positive psychology has drawn heavily on antecedent schools of thought, from the perennial legacy of philosophers in ancient Greece to 20th century and humanistic psychology. The first 'eudaimonists' of the modern world were perceived to be the mid-20th century humanistic psychologists (Boniwell, 2012). In 1954, Abraham Maslow presented an approach that focused on adaptive behaviours and aimed at releasing each human's potential. In his book 'Motivation and Personality', some of the first references to positive psychology are made. Similarly, in 1951, humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers (1951) highlighted people's tendency to actualise and enhance life outcomes. Despite the similarities between the two principles, humanistic psychology and positive psychology differ in terms of their emphasis to traditional research, with the former focusing more on individual experiences. Further, positive psychology places a greater

interest in life satisfaction and the outcomes of happiness (Compton and Hoffman, 2012).

With regard to school applications, the role of positive psychology is directed towards encouraging and rewarding children's strengths and talents, instead of punishing them for their deficits (Linley, Joseph, Maltby, Harrington & Wood, 2009). As Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) suggested, positive psychology seeks to promote positive experiences, institutions and individual traits. The latter is highly linked to individuals' strengths, virtues and talents, which can be utilised as tools to overcome difficulties and improve overall quality of life. To date, positive psychology research has covered a variety of educational areas including consultation, development of competencies and mental health well being. However, despite rigorous attempts to apply positive psychology principles in schools, challenges still exist, especially for the generalisation and long term application of these principles (Clonan, Chafouleas, McDougal & Riley-Tillman, 2004).

2.2.2 Strength-based intervention programmes overview

2.2.2.1 Defining strengths

Various attempts have been made to describe and define strengths in the ancient and the modern world. Historically, Aristotle suggested that virtues are deliberate choices that aim between two extremes and are informed by the person's wisdom and practical reason. More recently, Clifton and Anderson (2002) describe strengths as talents that consistently help produce high performance levels on a certain activity. Strengths can also be defined as an innate capacity to think, feel and behave in a way that promotes successful achievements (Madden, Green, Anthony & Grant, 2011). Building and developing strengths requires identification of the dominant innate resources, known as themes, particular discovery of the talents, and enrichment of those talents with extra knowledge and skills that must be actively acquired (Hodges & Clifton, 2004). Lastly, Padesky and Mooney (2012) describe strengths as "strategies, beliefs and assets used with relative ease that can promote the positive quality one is trying to build" (p.284).

2.2.2.2 History of strength-based approaches

It is unclear when the use of strengths started gaining attention in the educational and social context. In the ancient world, Aristotle spoke of twelve fundamental innate traits (see [Figure 2-1](#).) as character dispositions that can be cultivated and subsequently lead to eudaimonia. These traits are divided into two areas; those linked to intellectual excellence, which can be obtained through study, and those related to moral excellence, which is acquired through habit and good choices.

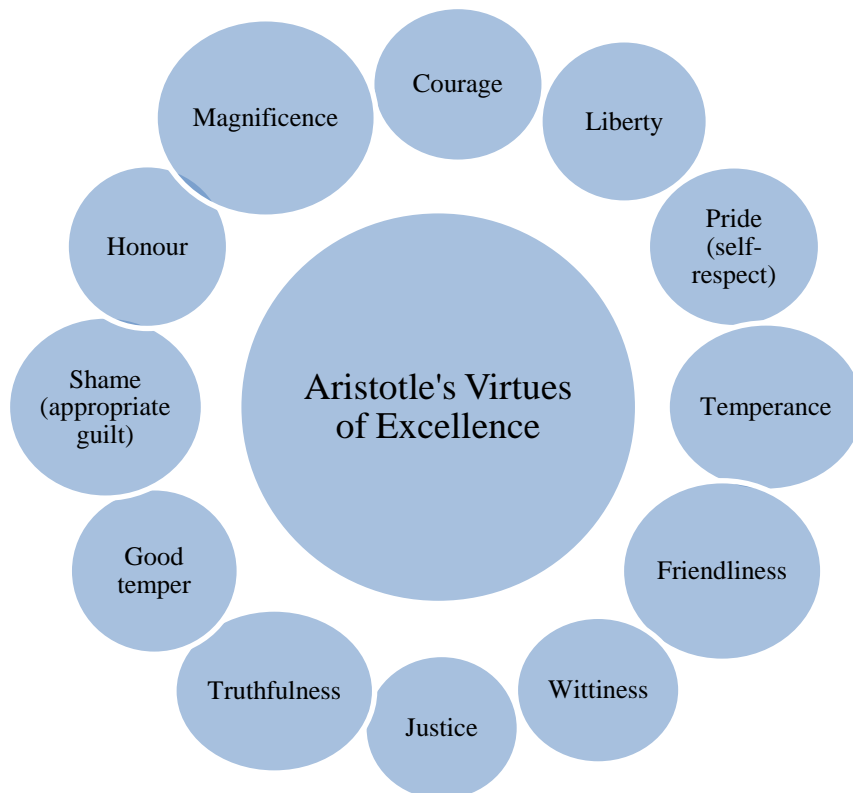


Figure 2-1. Aristotelian values

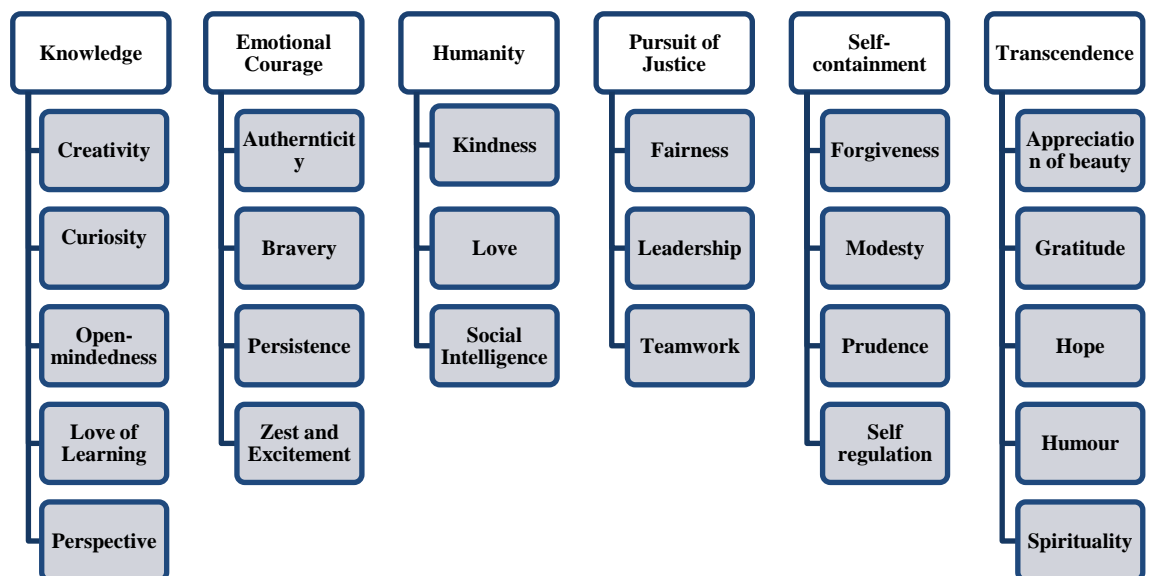
The importance of using the individual's positive resources rather than utilizing punitive methods has been evident since the 1920s. Specifically, in 1921 progressive educator Karl Wilker expressed the need to discover any deeply hidden positive and healthy elements in children (Brendtro, 2004). The basic principle of Wilker's philosophy was that restorative relationships worked better than punishment. Programmes focusing on moral treatment and self-governance were also introduced in the following decades, but three factors of the time inhibited their use: alternative methods were not welcome in a culture that was authoritarian, there was a lack of

research on positive approaches and finally there were no existing training programmes for specialists to attend (Ibid).

More recently, seeing individuals as decision makers who have preferences, choices and the potential to become effective in various areas of their lives (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) became the cornerstone for the development of strength-based approaches. Further research on human strengths led to Peterson and Seligman (2004) developing the Values In Action (VIA) inventory and the Signaturae Strengths, which are the top five character strengths and virtues that each person possesses based on a classification of 24 virtues (see

Figure 2-2). This tool assesses character strengths, which can also be divided into six broad divisions and can be used as a basis to promote wellbeing from a positive point of view. Following identification, the cultivation of strengths can commence in a creative and meticulous way. Individuals can be instructed to recognise and apply them on a daily basis. Identity and authenticity can be promoted through this practice, which will bring better wellbeing outcomes to children and young people. According to Madden, Green and Grant (2011) there is a tendency for individuals to feel an ownership of and an intrinsic motivation to use them.

Figure 2-2: The six broad divisions of character strengths and the themes they include (adapted from the classification of Peterson & Seligman, 2004).



Another classification of strengths is made by Clifton and Anderson (2002) where they grouped similar talents into themes. The five most dominant themes are referred to as Signature Themes. By acquiring knowledge and skills in them, individuals can acknowledge and develop their strengths. The StrengthsExplorer (Gallup Youth Development Specialists, 2007), which is the corresponding instrument suitable for young people 10-14 years old, includes ten talent themes (Table 2-1).

Table 2-1: Character themes (Gallup, 1999).

The eight character themes			
Achieving	Caring	Competing	Confidence
Discoverer	Future Thinker	Organiser	Presence

2.2.2.3 Strength-based intervention programmes and features

2.2.2.3.1 Programmes overview

The following section presents several initiatives from prominent researchers aimed to design and use strength-based intervention programmes. These programmes are usually based on an initial assessment of the person's strengths, later proceeding to offer guidance as to how to use, develop or discover more strengths relevant to the ones identified. As outlined by Brendtro (2004), moving from a coercive approach to a strength-based one involves shifting the focus from punishment and deprivation to nurturance and freedom.

The Clifton Strengths Finder (CSF) (Gallup, 1999), the StrengthsQuest (Clifton & Anderson, 2002) and the StrengthsExplorer (Gallup, 2005) are widely used tools designed to identify and use strengths further. They can provide valuable insights about individuals' strengths as well as offer guidance about how to utilize them. The CSF is a strengths and talents assessment tool, while the StrengthsExplorer is a programme aiming to promote successful educational and personal life. American psychologist Don Clifton and his colleagues aimed to investigate what is "right" within people and after a

systematic review of the data, they were able to identify more than 400 types of talents which were narrowed down to 34 for adults and to ten for young people. Once these strengths are acknowledged and understood, individuals can be guided to identify potential applications for their educational and personal life. The StrengthsExplorer is an instrument intended to help professionals working with students to incorporate their strength-based experiences in classrooms and in their everyday life.

A more recent programme called Strengths Gym was devised in the UK by Proctor and Fox Eades (2009). This tool is a curriculum-based approach for Personal Social Health and Citizenship Education and is designed to build strengths among school children. It is viewed as a collaborative approach between teachers and students, who learn together how to recognise, build upon and use their strengths. Instead of looking at risky behaviour and punitive practices, the Strengths Gym tries to enlighten individuals as to what they want and what will help them flourish. Each session examines one of the 24 strengths, as classified by Peterson and Seligman (2004) and includes a Strengths Builder and a Strengths Challenge exercise. These can be done individually, in small groups or at a whole class level. There is a degree of freedom in the activities that can be used and the instructor can choose according to what is most suitable for the particular target group. Findings so far suggest that pupils who receive this intervention show improvement in their wellbeing (Proctor, Tsukayama, Wood, Maltby, Fox Eades & Linley, 2011).

The Tree of Life (ToL), a narrative therapy strength-based intervention programme was devised by Ncube (2006) to enhance self-esteem and promote community cohesion by highlighting skills and promoting creative abilities in primary schools. Appreciative Inquiry techniques are used in the programme to define positive traits and develop cultural identity. The ToL can be used flexibly at individual or group level engaging the participants in making a tree that metaphorically allows them to convey their histories and aspirations (German, 2013).

2.2.2.3.2 Characteristics and features of strength based interventions

There are three stages in strength-based development (Clifton & Harter, 2003). Firstly, it is essential to identify the resource within the individual. Secondly, the resource should become integrated into how the individual views himself or herself. Finally, behavioural change should occur. When looking for children and young

people's strengths, focus is shifted to finding those competencies and characteristics that contribute to success and a satisfying life (Epstein & Sharma, 1998). Furthermore, this approach is based upon the principle that all children have strengths and that by using them we can improve performance and motivation. In addition, any lack of skill is viewed as an opportunity for learning and development (Epstein, Harniss, Robbins, Wheeler, Cyrulik, Kriz et al., 2003).

Strategies and practices that promote healthy development and successfully motivate children and young people can be used by schools, families and communities. Positive role models can be highly influential in building confidence and respect in children and young people. Beyond the family members, teachers can function as the inspiring adults who are genuinely interested in them. They listen to and acknowledge the difficulties of adolescence while supporting pupils in building their identity. Moreover, their faith in the students' strengths and their expectation that they have the capacity to succeed can be very empowering and can make individuals feel valued (O'Connell, 2006).

According to Lopez and Louis (2009), there are five core principles in strength-based education. The first principle is highlighting the need for a measurement and boost of academic as well as behavioural achievements, such as attendance, retention and engagement in school life. Secondly, individualisation of the learning content and targets can be highly significant. Setting unique goals for each person and providing appropriate and timely feedback clarifies what the person needs to pursue. A third principle involves the value of the wider social network, which helps individuals position and empower themselves through social support. When learning to use their strengths, individuals can also develop a capacity to generalise them in various settings. This is the fourth principle, according to which the guidance should aim to bring out the best set of skills and talents that can be used in various domains of life. Finally, the last principle entails that if children and young people cultivate their strengths, they will be in a good position to proactively seek new experiences where they can apply their skills and knowledge.

2.2.3 Evidence base for strength-based interventions with children and young people

A considerable amount of research and literature relevant to strength-based programmes for children and young people has accumulated in the last two decades. The majority is based on tools assessing a person's innate resources and great interest has been shown in how to use the identified strengths for the students' benefit.

In order to identify the most relevant literature, a systematic literature review commenced with keywords associated with strength-based interventions for children and young people. A detailed search strategy was developed as part of the preliminary study using keywords and relevant synonyms (Appendix 1). Electronic database searches were carried out in July 2014. In particular, several searches through the following databases were conducted: Academic Search Complete, British Education Index, Education Research Complete, ERIC, GoogleScholar, PsychInfo, Science Direct, Taylor & Francis and Wiley Online Library. Inclusion and exclusion criteria in relation to the area of interest, the context and the methodology, were applied to generate relevant citations. Combinations of key search terms were used (e.g., "intervention", "strength based", "adolescent") and studies were included if they were published after 1994. Further screening within the articles, manual search and prior knowledge in the area resulted in fourteen highly relevant articles.

The first strength based studies were conducted in educational institutions in Chicago by researchers from 1994 to 1997 (Harter, 1998). Findings revealed that students who were informed about their talents in the beginning of the year, performed higher in terms of their grades, were late less frequently and were absent fewer days by the end of the semester compared to a control group (semesters tend to last approximately 17 weeks in schools in Illinois). Williamson (2002) compared first-time college students who received Strengths Finder training with a control group and concluded that the study group had better performance in the end of the semester. Simultaneously, the long term retention for the first group appeared to be higher than the second group when measured one semester later.

An alternative school initiative to modify the behaviour of chronically disruptive pupils involved the use of a portfolio used as a strength-based monitoring instrument aiming to promote wellbeing, celebrate success and empower the link between school and family (Carpenter–Aeby & Kurtz, 2000). The portfolio was introduced by a school family worker as a means to support pupils in alternative provision, while assisting their

re-integration back to mainstream education. Qualitative evaluation reflected the helpful nature of this technique which was confirmed by parents and students alike. However, a number of limitations were identified when using this resource including that it is time consuming, that there was lack of understanding of its content and aim from all individuals involved, and that SEN did not allow an individual to access to the material.

In a pilot study that took place in a private primary school in Sydney (Madden, Green & Grant, 2011), 38 boys aging from 10 to 11 years old participated in a strengths coaching programme aiming to promote engagement and hope. The pupils were screened prior to the coaching programme using the Beck Youth Inventory (Beck, Beck, Jolly & Steer, 2005) and the VIA Strengths Inventory for Youth (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The sessions were run by a teacher-coach who held relevant qualifications and conducted eight sessions. The programme comprised three parts. The first one included developing an awareness of how the strengths identified by the VIA are used by the pupils already. In the second part, the teacher-coach encouraged the boys to use their strengths in a specific goal of their choice. Lastly, individual and systematic coaching was provided to the pupils as to how to generalise the use their strengths in a variety of steps of the self-regulation cycle. The quantitative and qualitative results (the latter were obtained by the teacher-coach) revealed that there was a significant increase in the levels of both engagement and hope for the boys. However, limitations are present in this study. In particular, there was a lack of a control group and no longitudinal measurement took place in order to check the long term effects. Finally, the fact that the programme was run by a teacher might have affected the pupils, who might have believed that there was an expectation for progress.

Researchers in the UK (Proctor et al, 2011) used a sample of 319 students aged between 12 and 14 years of age from schools located in the Channel Islands and in Cheshire. The Strengths Gym programme was used as part of the school curriculum and had three main targets: to develop already existing strengths, teach new strengths and help pupils identify strengths in other individuals. The most salient finding of this study was that the Strengths Gym participants had higher life satisfaction than the control group, when controlling for baseline life satisfaction, age, gender, school and year group. However, there were no statistically significant differences for the levels of self-esteem, positive affect and negative affect between the two groups. This study displayed

some important limitations, such as assigning the participants to either group based on convenience and using solely self-report measures to assess the outcomes.

Zyromsky, Bryant, Deese and Gerler (2008) used an online intervention to develop the strengths of students from an ethnic minority background. The participants were 139 pupils aged from 10 to 12 years old, 76% of whom were from American-Indian backgrounds. The qualitative analysis of the findings revealed that this approach promoted the identification of personal strengths and environmental aspects that can enhance positive development, while simultaneously improved academic success. The themes expressed by students revolved around working hard, having a positive mindset and using good listening skills, which were all acknowledged as the key to academic success.

Day-Vinez and Terriquez (2008) published an article presenting a strength-based initiative at an urban high school in California. It was targeted at African-American and Latino male students and aimed to reduce their high suspension and expulsion rates. Using the strengths-based school counselling framework, devised by Galassi and Akos (2007), one hundred young people were allocated to two groups and formed a school committee responsible for discussing discipline issues. With adult help, they were encouraged to develop their accountability, leadership, resiliency, self-management and social competence, leading to an impressive 75% reduction of suspensions in the school.

Three studies utilized the Clifton Strengths Finder (Gallup, 1998) and the StrengthsQuest (Clifton & Anderson, 2002) programmes to investigate how strength-based input would affect wellbeing and learning variables. Gillum's study (2005) examined the effect of strengths teaching to students who under-performed in maths. The sample consisted of first year of high school students (N=103) from four different classes. One class received strengths assessment, the second received strengths instruction, another received both and the control group was not exposed to any strengths approach. The study used a mixed methods design in order to reveal the effectiveness of each treatment and the students' perceptions of their strengths. The findings revealed that the group that received strengths-instruction intervention displayed greater benefits and that they appeared to have long term retention of their strengths. Furthermore, students in this group seemed to make more effort and said they generalised the use of strengths in other areas beyond the classroom. Limitations

relevant to this study include the small sample sizes and the lack of random assignment to the groups. Nevertheless, there is some evidence suggesting that specific strengths guidance enhances effort in underperforming students.

The second piece of research using the CSF and the StrengthsQuest was carried out by Austin (2005). In a comparative study of a strength-based and a traditional education programme, he used ninth-grade (between 14 and 15 years old) health education students (N=255) who were randomly assigned to the two learning conditions for a period of six weeks. Austin's aim was to investigate the effect of the two different curriculums on a number of different variables including motivation, positive risk-taking, efficacy and achievement scores. The findings confirmed that students who were exposed to strength-based teaching were more intrinsically motivated and would take more positive academic risks. However, extrinsic motivation, achievement and expectancy levels did not differ between the two groups. The most significant limitation in this study was the assignment of the teachers to the class sessions. More specifically, teachers used in the strength-based approach were chosen because of their relationship with the students and their caring nature, whereas the control group was taught by educators who were highly qualified to teach the course. Therefore, it is possible that the teaching style caused significant bias in the results of the study.

Turner (2004) assessed first year high school students' grades, lateness in class and challenging behaviour before allocating them to weekly strength-based sessions using the CSF and the StrengthsQuest. The control group received computer word processing training for the same amount of time. Turner reported a significant grade improvement for the treatment group in comparison to the control group and a great reduction in challenging behaviour events for the students who had received strength-based intervention. However, two important limitations are present in this study; the lack of random assignment of the students to the two conditions and the greatly variant pedagogical approaches used between the groups.

In a Canadian study, Harris, Brazeau, Clarkson, Brownlee and Rawana (2012) aimed to provide qualitative findings regarding how young people who struggle with substance misuse experience a strength-based intervention programme. Fifty-two participants aged from 15 to 18 years old took place in a five-week programme aiming at identifying, developing and applying strengths. Semi-structured interviews were used to assess how young people had experienced the programme and to answer the research

questions. Three baseline levels of strengths awareness were identified (not aware of strengths, aware but not engaged in strengths, and misuse of strengths) and by the end of the programme they all led to the use of strengths as coping strategies and protective factors. All the participants reported that the programme had some positive impact on them and most of them claimed that as a result of the intervention they are more able to overcome their substance abuse. In addition to this, participants perceived the programme from a resilience point of view and acknowledged the value of the intervention in helping them address the substance abuse they were facing. Due to the small sample size, generalising the findings to other settings is not possible. In addition to that, methodological issues of bias existing in this particular research design, since the intervention facilitators were also the people who interviewed the participants.

Two studies in the UK evaluated the ToL programme for primary aged pupils (German, 2013; Hughes, 2013). Semi-structured interviews and self-report scales were used for the first study which revealed positive outcomes for the participants in terms of their self-esteem and an increase in their understanding of their own cultural identity. In addition the findings reflected a decrease in racism and increase in pupils' pride levels after the end of the intervention programme. The second study triangulated these findings with teacher reports which showed that there was a reported improvement in motivation and behaviour. Moreover, the pupils enjoyed the programme and recognised its value. However, the lack of control group, as well as the small sample sizes, present as the most significant limitations of the studies.

The most recent strength-based study (Bozic, 2013) explored how strengths could be incorporated in routine school-based EP involvement. The participants in this multiple case study were six pupils in early adolescence (10 to 14 years old) with behaviour or emotional difficulties. Across an 18-month period they either received individual sessions relevant to strengths development, or indirect sessions were offered to their teachers in order to inform intervention work. Areas of interest, skills and assets within the child's environment were perceived as strengths and were used as information for differentiation of the curriculum. The findings verified that strengths could be identified across a number of ecological systems (within the individual, the peer network, the family, the school etc.) and the majority of the pupils showed positive change. Some inevitable limitations were present in this study; these include the small number of participants and the lack of diversity, in that all pupils attended the same

school. In addition, despite the longer duration of this research, there is still need for further longitudinal exploration, to define how the pupils' strengths would develop if a second cycle of assessment, planning and intervention was put in place.

To sum up, there is a substantial amount of scientific evidence that allows for some conclusions to be drawn about the effectiveness of strength-based interventions. However, there are still many questions to be answered as the majority of the studies fail to focus on vulnerable groups, including those on the verge of exclusion. The researcher acknowledged this gap and the following section is dedicated to this population.

2.3 School exclusions

2.3.1 Description and rates

Minimising school exclusions has historically been a significant government priority and this commitment is evident by several initiatives which focus on inclusive practice and equal opportunities (DfES, 2001; Dyson, Farrell, Polat, Hutcheson & Gallannaugh, 2004; DCSF, 2008). In essence, exclusions function as disciplinary methods for pupils displaying unacceptable behaviour and as a means to protect the wellbeing of the pupil or others at school (Kyriacou, 2003). As mentioned in previous chapters, there are two types of official exclusions, fixed term and permanent. In terms of the former, a pupil can be excluded for more than one fixed period and this does not have to be in a continuous period of time (DfE, 2012b). In addition, a fixed term exclusion can be converted to a permanent exclusion if this is deemed appropriate and in accordance with new evidence. The school's head teacher has the power to exclude a pupil in accordance to government policy. A serious unique incident, persistent breach of the school's behaviour policy or significant concerns about the pupil's own health or the health of others in the setting are the only reasons for exclusion, which should be used as a last resort (DfE, 2012b).

Despite a substantial decrease in the rates of permanent exclusions since 1995/1996, in the academic year 2012/2013 there were 4,630 excluded pupils (a ratio of 6 out of 10,000) and 267,520 fixed period exclusions, whilst the number of pupils who were excluded for one or more fixed term periods was 146,070, equating to 192 pupils

per 10,000 (DfE, 2014a). Disruptive behaviour has been consistently the most common reason for exclusion (DfE, 2009; DfE, 2013a; DfE, 2014a) and for the academic year 2012-13 it was accountable for 32.9% of all permanent exclusions and 24.2% of all fixed term exclusions (DfE, 2014a). Physical assault and verbal abuse against other pupils were the most common reasons for both types of exclusions and secondary schools appear to have the majority of permanently excluded pupils (DfE, 2012a). In addition, verbal abuse and threatening behaviour against staff have also been identified as reasons for exclusion (Hallam & Rogers, 2008). The tables below provide an overview of how permanent (Figure 2-3) and fixed term (Figure 2-4) exclusions fluctuated in the last decade.

Figure 2-3. Permanent exclusions in the last decade

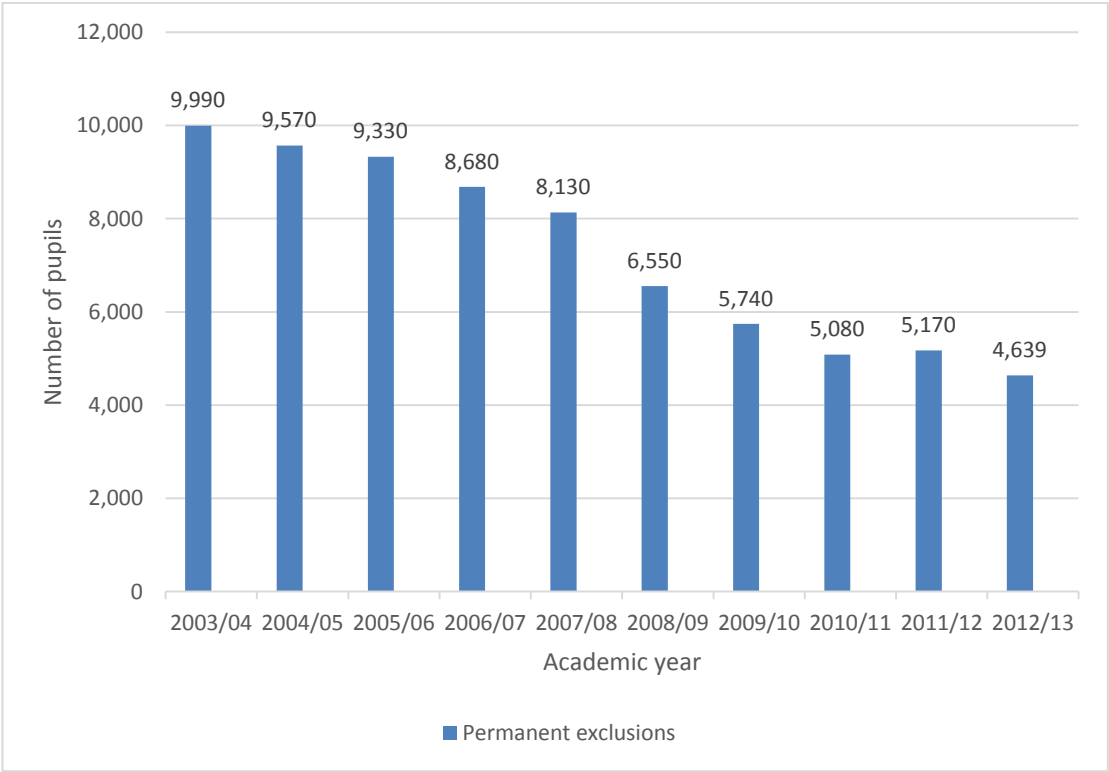
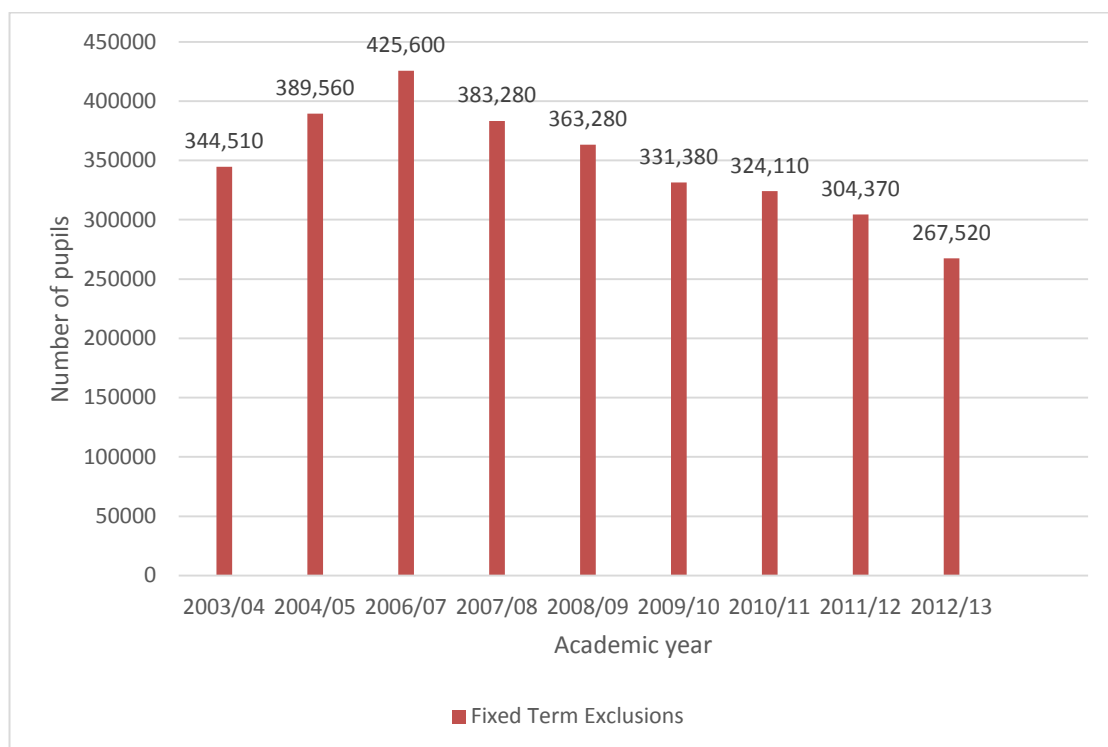


Figure 2-4. Fixed terms exclusions in the last decade



The occurrence of exclusions is not the result of a single element. A plethora of factors seem to be linked with greater risk of exclusions, including special educational needs (DfE, 2012b), emotional and behavioural difficulties (Munn, Lloyd & Cullen, 2000; Panayiotopoulos & Kerfoot, 2007), and an ethnic minority background (DCSF, 2008). Also, boys of all ages are more likely to be excluded than girls (DfE, 2012a). The most frequent point for exclusion appears to be Year 10 (Kyriacou, 2003) and approximately 52% of all permanent exclusions appear to take place in years 9 and 10 (DCSF, 2009; DfE, 2013a). At international level, Parsons (2009) highlights that England seems to have higher exclusion rates than other countries in the UK and that no other European country gives the right to the school head teacher to permanently exclude a pupil.

2.3.2 Consequences of exclusion

Evidence suggests that exclusions from school can have short and long term effects in the academic as well as the social life of the individual (Pomeroy, 2000; Macrae, Maguire & Milbourne, 2003). Immediate emotional reactions towards exclusion may include feelings of rejection, anger and shock for the pupil, whereas

parents express concerns about the loss of education incurred and the fact that the family is stigmatised (Munn, Lloyd & Cullen, 2000). In a review of various studies that explored the short term outcomes for those who had been permanently excluded, Kyriacou (2003) concluded that almost all pupils were educated in a pupil referral unit (PRU), received home tuition, or attended new mainstream or special schools. The Centre of Social Justice (2011) emphasised the importance of preventing exclusions by intervening as early as possible to avoid escalation to further problems and severe consequences. For example, Howarth (2004) suggests that individuals who have experienced school exclusion are at a higher risk for unemployment, homelessness and crime, while Briggs (2010) associated school exclusions with future engagement in street gang culture.

Furthermore, a study from Daniels (2011) suggests that, when approached two years after their exclusion, young people thought that this event had damaging effects in their social and professional life. In terms of financial impact, it is calculated that approximately £77 million was spent in 1997-1998 alone to support permanently excluded pupils (Parsons, 1999). More recent reports suggest that the cost of exclusions for education, social services, and the health sector is £63,851 per excluded pupil (Brookes, Goodhall & Heady 2007). Economic research suggested that an early intervention programme investing in the reduction of exclusions could have dramatic effects on the UK economy and result in savings equivalent to £486 billion over 20 years when taking in consideration the social consequences for the individual (Centre for Social Justice, 2011).

2.3.3 National and local context in relation to reducing and preventing exclusions

Over the last decades, school exclusions have become a key agenda item within the UK educational policy and schools have been identified as one of the main settings for action. The Education Act (DfEE, 1997) highlighted the importance of behaviour policy and procedures for schools, and required local educational authorities to outline their support plans for pupils who displayed disruptive behaviour or are excluded. As a result of the high rates of exclusion and truancy in 1996, the first Truancy and School Exclusion Report was published by the Social Exclusion Unit (1998). Whilst acknowledging the magnitude and gravity of the issue, the report shed light on the

complex background of those excluded individuals in terms of family culture, low aspirations and low literacy skills. A set of recommendations were provided alongside an action plan aiming to reduce exclusion and truancy rates by 2002.

Guidance on whole school behaviour and attendance policy was published by DfES (2003) and incorporated the notion of promoting positive behaviour. This was followed by a more individualised SEN strategy (DfES, 2004), where addressing challenging behaviour and reducing exclusions were key targets and emphasis was placed on building upon each pupil's strengths. The Education and Inspections Act (DfES, 2006a) indicated the responsibility for schools to have clear discipline principles and take steps to ensure positive behaviour while supporting the wellbeing of the child. Similarly, DfES guidance was released in 2007 on improving behaviour and attendance; it highlighted the significance of early intervention and promotion of positive behaviour.

As a result of the government's endeavour to focus on early intervention, preventative strategies became prominent in DCSF guidance (2008). Advice on pupils at risk of exclusion was outlined and stated that referral to specific support services and multi-agency work should be followed. The Common Assessment Framework (DfES, 2006b) was identified as an indicative strategy to promote the working links of external professionals. Despite reiterating the importance of ongoing support and early intervention for pupils of all ages (Centre for Social Justice, 2011), more investment has been identified for secondary aged pupils. Bangle and Pritchard (1998) revealed that schools that adopted preventative strategies to reduce exclusions experienced up to four times more financial savings than school that did not. More recent government documents have suggested multi-agency assessment and alternative providers as means of managing challenging behaviour and containing emotional difficulties, in order to reduce exclusions (DfE, 2015).

The necessity for school policies and procedures to promote fairness and equality was highlighted by a recent government initiative (DfE 2012b), where schools were urged to acknowledge and adopt a sensitive stance to individual differences. The main target of this guidance was to ensure fairness and that no increase in exclusions will take place as a result of discriminatory principles in school policies, in light of The Equality Act (2010). Decreasing inequality between children has been inextricably linked with good behaviour, academic attainment, and reduced exclusions (DfE,

2013b). Additionally, school engagement was seen as a significant route to improving attainment and behaviour for children and young people.

In the light of the increasing number of ‘converted’ academies, the need to monitor exclusions and ensure behaviour policy is put in place was made explicit, in an attempt to eradicate illegal exclusions (DfE 2013b). However, in spite of the numerous legislative documents released by the government, it has been exceptionally arduous for maintained schools to define specific thresholds for an exclusion decision to be made (Kyriacou 2003; Hallam & Rogers, 2008). On the one hand, tolerance levels in different schools vary; on the other, schools endeavour to find a balance between supporting a pupil with problematic behaviour and protecting the school from further breaches of behaviour policy.

2.3.4 Interventions and practices to tackle school exclusions

A plethora of particularly insightful programmes, plans, and initiatives were devised in accordance to the aforementioned legislation, having as their uppermost aim reducing exclusions and minimising disruptive behaviour. Hallam and Rogers (2008) proposed that various types of provision should be embedded in educational practice for pupils at risk, namely Behaviour and Education Support Teams (BEST), nurture groups, key workers, learning mentors and learning support units. The Government’s plan to improve behaviour led to the Behaviour Improvement Programme (BIP), which commenced in July 2002 in 700 schools across 34 LAs (Hallam, Castle, Rogers, Creech, Rhamie & Kokotsaki, 2005), and promoted positive behaviour, attendance, and attainment. As a result, it significantly reduced fixed term exclusions in secondary schools.

Furthermore, recruitment of professionals trained in social work in primary and secondary schools was proven effective in reducing exclusions, minimising truancy, and diminishing bullying, while resulting in significant financial savings (Bangle & Pritchard, 1998; Vulliamy & Webb, 2003). Positive psychological functioning approaches have been reviewed and evidence suggests that school-wide Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and the Positive Action programme, which have been extensively used across the USA, are linked with improvements in attainment, and minimisation of disciplinary referrals and school exclusions (Huebner, Hills & Jiuang, 2013; Howell, Keyes & Passmore, 2013).

Successful involvement of multi-agency teams working towards the improvement of behaviour policy and practice was reported by Swinson (2010). Similarly, Hallam and Castle (2001) argued that a multi-disciplinary behaviour support team and an internal school centre are effective at reducing school exclusions, while being less costly. However, this was the case for the projects whose overarching principles included a whole school approach, commitment of the school's senior leadership team, parental engagement and placing responsibility within the pupil.

A study using assertive discipline principles as a whole school approach (Jones & Smith, 2004) revealed that fixed term exclusions dramatically decreased, whilst for the last year of the study no permanent exclusions were noted. According to pupils and staff, behaviour policy clarity was the key in determining a consistent discipline and reward system. Lastly, three school-wide approaches for improving discipline were reviewed (Osher, Bear, Sprague & Doyle, 2010) to identify three key components that contribute to a harmonious environment and discipline in schools. Engaging the family, having a culturally and linguistically sensitive environment and addressing mental health needs were recognised as fundamental factors to improving behaviour.

In order to explore the most specific and up to date literature about group interventions aiming to support pupils at risk of exclusion, a systematic literature review was essential. For this strategy, inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied and Boolean search mode was used. Keywords and phrases were expanded (e.g., by using synonyms) to cover the areas explored, for example "pupil", "support" and "suspension". Further studies of interest were identified through manual cross-referencing within papers. Out of the 891 citations initially identified, 883 were discarded and eight were deemed appropriate for the study (see Appendix 2 for additional information).

Intervention programmes to support pupils displaying challenging behaviour or those at risk of exclusion have provided a more targeted approach to intervention. A programme designed by the Hampshire EPS aimed to promote self-awareness and help individuals come up with personal behaviour targets with the scope of reducing the possibility of exclusion (Burton, 2006). Positive results were noted after the end of the intervention and included improvements in behaviour and social skills, while at follow up seven months later none of the pupils had been excluded. Likewise, a Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) intervention programme (Humphrey & Brooks, 2006)

designed for secondary pupils that were referred for anger management difficulties and identified as being at high risk of exclusion, led to successful results as indicated by the behaviour measures used. Gilmore (2013) conducted a study, using a disciplinary Inclusion Room (IR) within the school setting, designed to reduce fixed term exclusions and identify the pupils' perception of this practice. The findings disclosed that the inclusive notion of the specific strategy was valued by the pupils. They acknowledged that staying in school promoted their participation and prevented feelings of social segregation, while offering them time and space to reflect upon their behaviour and how to rectify it.

A similar study (Timmins, Shepheds & Kelly, 2003) was designed to illustrate teachers' views about an internal behaviour support unit aiming to tackle exclusions. The study showed that this provision saves pupils from the stigma of the PRU and from difficulties into re-integrating after the exclusion period. Teachers believed that some pupils managed to prevent a fixed term exclusion because of this type of support. Furthermore, a study that looked into the interpretation and implementation of government policy for pupils who were at risk of exclusion in three primary schools (Macrae, Maguire, & Melbourne, 2003) highlighted the criticality of early intervention. The researchers argued that challenging behaviour at a young age may be a sign of an unmet need which should be fulfilled, to avoid later exclusion. Primary school pupils who were excluded or at risk of exclusion received a language and communication intervention (Law & Sivyver, 2003). Participants were allocated to treatment and control groups and after the end of the intervention beneficial effects in terms of language, communication, and self-esteem were revealed. The two groups did not present significant differences regarding behaviour. Therefore, there is not adequate evidence to suggest that improvement of communication is associated with improved behaviour.

The Office for Public Management (2012) released an evaluative report of three therapeutic projects to prevent school exclusions. The interventions varied significantly. In particular, the first project was aiming to identify behavioural issues and intervene as early as possible, the second adopted family therapy practices, while the third one focused on excluded pupils or those at risk. Each of them had noteworthy success elements which can inform future practice; the opportunity for multi-agency work, the support from the school's senior management team and the clarification of expectations

and responsibilities to parents in terms of pupil support, were regarded as the most influential factors for making positive change.

Finally, a case study with year 10 pupils identified to be at risk of exclusion described the use of Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) (Kelly, 1955) to improve outcomes for the particular individual (Hardman, 2001). The eight week project was facilitated by an EP, resulted in behaviour improvement, and offered valuable information of how to best support the young person in the mainstream school setting using a Pastoral Support Plan.

2.3.5 Psychological theories relevant to challenging behaviour and exclusions

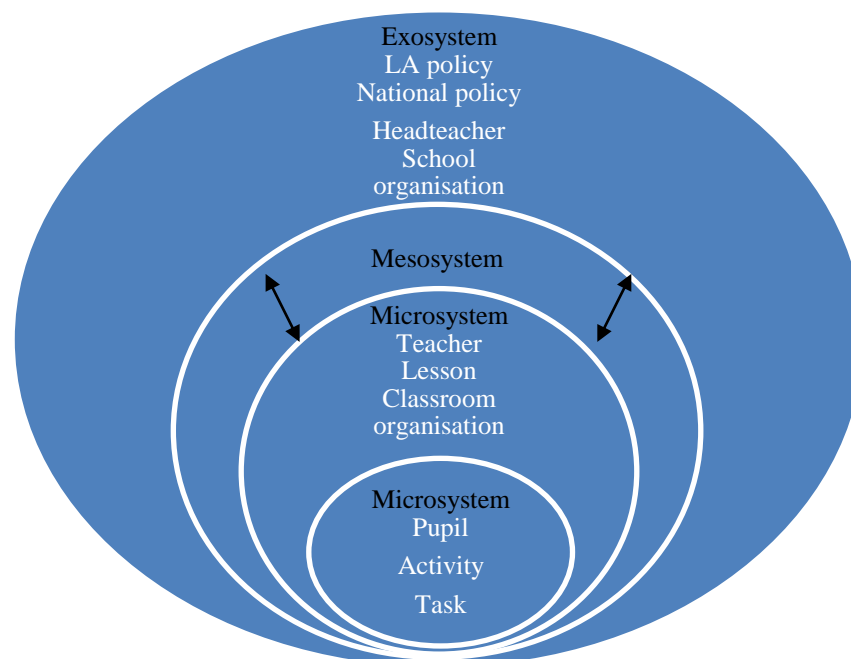
By and large, psychological theories have endeavoured to explain, interpret and eradicate school exclusions and challenging behaviour. An understanding of the psychological mechanisms that function within the pupil and of the surrounding environment is crucial in order to create conditions for suitable interventions, minimise exclusions and promote inclusion.

A psychological theory that undoubtedly deserves attention in this area is Bronfenbrenner's Ecosystemic model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) which acknowledges that human development should be perceived holistically and through the lens of the wider context. The model suggests that a number of domains around the child, namely the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem and the macrosystem, are networks that influence the child directly and indirectly, and changes within one system can have reciprocal consequences for another. The theory, therefore, proposes that factors within and around the child, as well as interactions between networks, can affect a child's developmental path. This also suggests that the child is not influenced by an isolated single causal element. Attention is given to the family context, the physical environment and the wider psychosocial factors, which are perceived as impacting components, and the model can function as a framework to assess the multiple layers affecting exclusion.

Direct links between school exclusions and the Ecosystemic theory have been reflected by the work of a notable amount of theorists and researchers. McElwee (2007) emphasised that a child's potential and ability to become a fully functional individual may be hindered by a social environment that does not allow positive development to occur. Negative influences from the surrounding networks can accumulate to place the

child of higher risk. In terms of explaining exclusions and challenging behaviour, Hallam and Rogers (2008) suggest that this may be the result of unhelpful interactions between systems factors. Interactions between parents, teachers and students, the school ethos as well as the wider social context can all influence pupil behaviour and perceptions, and within this remit whole school approaches, home-school liaison and multi-agency work are paramount (Rendall & Stuart, 2005). Tyler and Jones (2002) argue that problem behaviours can change by discontinuing unhelpful interactions around the child, and replacing them with a collaborative and supportive environment. Indeed, Munn, Lloyd and Cullen (2000) distinguished the positive contributors to pupils' behaviour and concluded that an emphasis on social development, positive teacher-student interactions and a welcoming environment made a difference. De Jong (2005) introduced fundamental principles for improving behaviour using the Ecosystemic model in schools, and suggested that interventions should be characterised by a supportive and inclusive environment embracing a holistic approach, accompanied by an understanding of the inextricable links between learning experience and behaviour. Finally, the multiple layers that influence pupils within the school environment were outlined by Sellman, Bedward, Cole and Daniels (2002) who used the Ecosystemic philosophical underpinnings to depict the various components that coexist and interact (figure 2-3).

Figure 2-5. The multiple layers of influence for pupils in a school (adapted from Sellman, Bedward, Cole and Daniels, 2002)



Other psychological theories pertinent to disaffected pupils and challenging behaviour have received less attention. Gillies and Robinson (2013) proposed that Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligence theory (Goleman, 1997) has influenced legislation and educational practice throughout the UK as an approach to promoting pupils' behaviour. The Self-determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) suggests that a drive for growth and fulfilment exists in all individuals and highlights three key aspects in human life that promote psychological growth: autonomy, belongingness and competence. They need to coexist at satisfactory levels for a person to be able to function and achieve his or her full potential. Rewards and motives in the educational context are also central in this theory, with intrinsic motivation being the autonomous drive that enhances wellbeing and extrinsic motivation being heteronomous in the respect that it is associated with tangible rewards (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Findings from Deci, Koestner and Ryan (2001) suggest that extrinsic rewards undermine intrinsic motivation for learning and good behaviour. In line with this finding, Dunlap, Horrower and Fox (2005) explored the notion of problem behaviour as a functional element and they argued that finding the underlying meanings and reasons is paramount in order to intervene successfully.

Lastly, Maslow's theory of needs (1970) can be used as a basis for understanding and interpreting challenging behaviour. The lack of homeostasis can create a barrier to developing and using human potential regardless of the person's age and developmental stage. The overarching belief that humans are motivated to act by unsatisfied needs can offer valuable insight when working with children and young people from deprived environments. In addition, Maslow pointed out that stressors and negative life events may lead to regression to an earlier stage and can link with unhelpful behaviours.

2.4 Drawing the literature together

The two systematic literature reviews and the theories underpinning strength-based and school exclusion interventions present synergies and commonalities. Increasing interest in school behaviour and attendance is observed by both types of interventions and most psychological theories emphasise the need to change perceptions relevant to the individual and their environment. The notion of growth is eminent in

both self-determination and positive psychology theories, by focusing on achieving the person's full potential. The latter is also distinguishable in Maslow's theory as the person's uppermost target. Given these intertwined features and the similarities in the overall focus, opportunity and scope for novel research arose, combining the principles and aims of the two areas.

2.5 Summary of the chapter

In summary, the literature review has critically described theory and findings related to positive psychology, strength-based practices and school exclusions, by examining the relationship of these to work undertaken by EPs, particularly with regard to intervention strategies. As a result of this review, a research gap becomes evident and highlights the need for investigation into strength-based practices in education, particularly with regard to populations who are at risk of exclusion. The following chapter will provide a description of the research methodology.

3 Methodology and data collection

3.1 Introduction to chapter

In this chapter the research hypotheses and questions addressed in the study will be formally stated, and the research paradigm and design will be introduced. In particular, the nature and implementation of the intervention programme being evaluated will be presented and further reference will be made to the status of the researcher and the research programme. Specifically, reference to the quantitative and qualitative components of the research will be made, including the procedure for data gathering, coding and analysis.

3.2 Hypotheses and research questions

In accordance with empirical literature outlined in the previous chapter and theoretical consideration, four hypotheses were formulated. Overall, it is expected that a strength-based intervention will be beneficial. In particular:

Hypothesis 1: Findings reveal that a strength-based intervention can improve life satisfaction (Proctor et al., 2011); therefore, it is hypothesised that the recognition and frequent use of strengths will lead to higher life satisfaction for secondary aged pupils, when controlling for pre-intervention life satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: Young people who participated in a strength-based intervention showed improvement in terms of attendance (Harter, 1998) and school engagement (Madden, Green & Grant, 2011). Therefore, it is expected that students who know and use their strengths more frequently will be more engaged with school and will have higher attendance after the intervention.

Hypothesis 3: In terms of development, strengths interventions can enhance positive development and promote the use of strengths in the school setting (Austin, 2005; Zyromski et al. 2008). Therefore, it is anticipated that a strength-based intervention will result in observable improvement of use of strengths in various contexts.

Hypothesis 4: Based on previous findings (Turner, 2004; Day-Vines & Terriquez, 2008), it is expected that a strength-based intervention will be helpful for pupils at risk of exclusion, reduce challenging behaviour and minimise school exclusions.

The limited amount of research into strength-based programmes for KS3 pupils (10 to 14 years old) and those AROE in the UK, and the lack of focus on early intervention, are two prominent examples of gaps in the literature. The current study intends to represent the voice of young people, including those AROE, and aspires to inform future practice based on their views. It also aims to produce new insights and practical recommendations for EPs and other professionals working with populations AROE and at whole school level, in order to reduce exclusion rates and improve the overall wellbeing of this vulnerable population. The following **research questions** will be addressed:

Quantitative phase:

- Is a strength-based intervention effective in increasing school attendance?
- Are there differences in impact between the two groups of pupils AROE and non AROE?

Qualitative phase:

- How helpful has the strength-based intervention been for the young people in this study?
- How was the overall experience?
- What was most and least helpful?

Quantitative and qualitative phase:

- How can practice involving a strength-based intervention improve in schools?
- Can strength-based interventions be effective in increasing wellbeing and reducing school exclusions?

3.3 Theoretical perspective

3.3.1 Ontological, epistemological and axiological considerations

To begin with, it is essential to determine the philosophy of science and the worldview through which the research was developed. Thus, the following paragraphs intend to present ontology, epistemology and axiology, alongside the positions adopted in the current study. To begin with, the underpinning belief system that influences how research questions are asked and answered, while shaping the overall philosophical perception of knowledge, is informed by a research paradigm. Although the ontological and epistemological areas are segregated, they do inform each other and are covered by a common paradigm. Ontology focuses on the nature of reality (Mertens, 2010) by explaining the truth and what reality is. It is also involved with the way individuals view themselves and the world around them (McNiff, 2013). In order for reality to be discovered, it is essential to adopt a perspective for how one can reach a level of knowledge (Bryman, 2012); this interest in the nature of knowledge is explored by epistemology which revolves around the content and the most appropriate methods for acquiring knowledge (McNiff, 2013). The researcher adopted a pragmatic position for ontology and epistemology, since the main endeavour was to achieve a wide exploration of the topic, while using an analytic lens to permit substantial in-depth investigation.

Ethical principles are essential for real world research and they should guide the research realm (Robson, 2011). In addition, Mertens (2010) suggests that axiological and ethical considerations should be embedded in the research planning process. Axiology is seen as the nature of ethical behaviour, and is concerned with how values are positioned and function in the research (Ponterotto, 2005). For this study, the researcher adopted a post-positivist view for axiology, as this is in line with personal beliefs and core principles. This paradigm indicates that research has to be guided by respect, beneficence and justice (Mertens, 2010).

3.3.2 Pragmatism

In this study, the pragmatic paradigm permeates the philosophical underpinnings, placing the interest on what works and what is effective (Creswell, 2014a). According to Robson (2011), pragmatism tests truth based on practical *a*

posteriori consequences, and focuses on finding problems and solutions in particular situations. This is in line with the research aim to identify the effectiveness of strength-based interventions and how to improve practice for pupils AROE and not AROE.

The term pragmatism derives from Greek *pratto* (*πράττω*) which means to practice and achieve (Collins Greek Dictionary, 2009). Pragmatists believe that the focus should shift from the antecedent causal objectives to possibilities for future action (Cherryholmes, 1992). They follow pluralistic principles which are in line with individual experiences and interpretations for both the participants and the researcher. The social, historical, and political background is crucial for the pragmatic worldview, and experiences are believed to be influenced and shaped by their context. Specifically, according to Cherryholmes (1992), when individuals read the world, they can never be quite sure if this is the actual "world" or if they are reading themselves. The fact that organisms develop an understanding of their context in particular environments also reveals that truth and reality are shaped through individual experiences. Subsequent to that, scientific knowledge is situated and enacted from a specific viewpoint.

A core principle of the pragmatic approach was highlighted by Morgan (2007), who noted that between a subjective and an objective understanding of the world, the pragmatic paradigm supports a duality, by proposing an intersubjective approach. This dimension emphasizes communication and shared meaning, while signifying the need for a mutual understanding for the participants and others who will read the research. Similarly, in the two ends of context specificity and generalisation of the findings in a piece of research, pragmatists subscribe to a transferability approach. The two extremes of absolute uniqueness of the case and complete generalisation to every context are both rejected; instead, pragmatists try to discover the extent to which the findings can be used in other circumstances and in other settings.

In terms of pragmatic research, this aims to discover the *what* and *how* in accordance with what is working and its contribution to the world. Similarly, when linked with EP practice, pragmatism emphasises what needs to be done and encourages the need to take action (Burnham, 2013). Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) suggest that mixed methodology is predominantly associated with pragmatism, a rationale also articulated by Mertens (2010), who acknowledged that a single research approach will not be able to adequately reveal the truth. The fact that the world does not consist of one whole, but various multiple components, makes it easier to realise why multiple

research methods are the most appropriate way to come to an understanding (Creswell, 2014a). Finally, pragmatism allows a high degree of freedom for the researcher with regard to methods, techniques, and assumptions, which are all shaped by the research purposes. To a certain extent, this lack of rigid methodology leads to an eclectic application of research (Baert, 2011). Therefore, it is the topic and the research purpose that work as the main tools to inform the techniques and the methods used, rather than the theoretical and philosophical position.

Moreover, the researcher believes that research actions should be guided by *a priori* principles and this is in line with the pragmatic position that research is inevitably embedded in a specific socio-political and historical context (Mertens, 2010). Although there is no objective reality for pragmatists, it is not considered fully subjective either (Kitcher, 2012). In terms of epistemology, pragmatists posit that knowledge is created by the researcher's interests. Nevertheless, subjectivity fails at the level that pragmatists believe that their understanding can reflect the internal as well as the external world. In essence, the current work is based on the idea that social science inquiry cannot rely on a single research method and that flexibility is required. This is mainly based upon the notion that, even if there is a single reality, individuals vary in their interpretations. This point of view is in line with pragmatism, according to which the individuals' claims and understandings are intertwined with their activities. Social and cultural dimensions influence the claims and make them somewhat situation specific. Specifically, any human activity is perceived as a social activity and any social activity is believed to be a situated activity (Baert, 2011). The researcher holds the view that research is a holistic attempt in which perseverance, thorough observation and triangulation are indispensable. This is in line with pragmatic principles, according to which using mixed methods to answer a single inquiry will reveal an understanding of its meaning, while the quantitative and qualitative methods will inform each other to verify the findings and produce more powerful conclusions (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005)

3.3.3 Research aims

A central tenet of the researcher's approach is to use evidence-based practice to define the effectiveness and the broader effects a strength-based programme can have on young people, including those AROE. In order to clarify what makes a difference to

their lives, the current study aims to discover what promotes change and find ways to further improve practice. These targets are associated with evaluative and exploratory purposes. Evaluative research is concerned with determining whether the programme in question has made a difference and achieved its targets (Bryman, 2012). It focuses on broad questions and tries to clarify reasons for effectiveness, rather than merely looking at cause and effect (Fox, Martin & Green, 2007). Furthermore, evaluation takes place in many different contexts and is dependent upon the availability of resources in the particular context, simultaneously aiming to address the interests of particular stakeholders (Mertens, 2010). Change is a central ingredient, and identifying the elements that promote it tends to be the underpinning for finding further ways of improvement (Robson, 2011). Similarly, Powell (2006) suggests that special techniques of evaluative research should be used to ensure precision, and informing professional practice should be the uppermost target of this approach. Although the vast majority of evaluative studies adopt a quantitative method, Bryman (2012) suggests that qualitative research is beginning to attract attention in the field.

According to Robson (2011), a coherent definition of evaluation research should contain the following key elements: the systematic collection of evidence, the utility of the method and the coverage of a broad range of areas. In addition, he draws attention to certain factors that need to be fulfilled for an evaluation to be carried out appropriately; these include utility, feasibility, propriety, and technical adequacy. As such, the current study followed these principles and took into consideration elements of applicability, practical arrangements, ethics and professional conduct.

The pragmatic approach ties in with evaluative research and both attempt to offer useful information for better practice (Mertens, 2010). Therefore, it is important to ascertain the differences between the purposes of the programme and the evaluation, and have a clear view of what is researched. A distinction frequently made is between process evaluation, which is also associated with formative evaluation, and outcome evaluation, which is linked to summative evaluation (Fox, Martin & Green, 2007; Robson, 2011). In addition, they are related to qualitative and quantitative methods respectively. On the one hand, outcome evaluation is driven by positivist principles that tend to require statistical analyses. On the other hand, process evaluation looks into the methods and ways of affecting change. The current study was designed to evaluate both

the intervention content and its efficacy, which results to a duality of aims and a mixed method for evaluation.

Difficulties when conducting evaluative research have been documented, highlighting that the notion of ‘judgement’ that evaluation entails (Fox, Martin & Green, 2007) has a sensitive element. The stakeholders involved will influence the research and will in turn be influenced by the findings. It is therefore crucial to ensure that they are informed about the research purpose and that they have the opportunity to articulate their views.

In order to understand fully the intervention experience for the participants, it was considered vital to elicit their views and examine these in an open way. In addition, staff views were deemed of high value at this stage. The exploratory underpinnings that inform this research allow a broad discovery of the research questions and provide an enriched illustration of the topic (Stebbins, 2001). Together, the two purposes lead to an exploratory evaluation approach that captures the complexity of the research enquiry. The current study envisaged to achieve a simultaneous investigation of the outcome and the way in which the strength-based intervention was experienced by the young people.

The beneficial role and place of evaluation stems from treatment effectiveness research and the need to define the integrity and strength of the programme investigated. Cordray and Pion (2006) pointed out that it is crucial to distinguish between treatment strength and integrity, since the former looks into the *intensity* of the treatment, while the latter is associated with the consistency and level of *fidelity* of the plan. They concluded that these concepts need to be central in evaluative research and should be investigated separately.

3.4 Participant recruitment and characteristics

The research took place in three mainstream secondary schools of an outer London highly ethnically diverse LA, where approximately half the population comes from ethnic minority backgrounds. Two of the participating schools were community schools and one had recently converted into an academy. The schools were contacted via the EPS, and were informed about the research via email and post. A research summary was distributed and further visits were offered to those schools that expressed an interest.

According to the literature, the most frequent reason for exclusion is challenging behaviour (DfE, 2009; DfE, 2012a; DfE, 2013a). Most exclusions take place in Years 9 and 10 (Kyriacou, 2003; DCSF, 2009; DfE, 2013a). Maintaining a balance between a substantial sample size and realistic expectations presented a challenge for the current study. The sampling method was purposeful (Robson, 2011) and criterion-based, meaning that it was in accordance with certain characteristics (Mertens, 2010). Due to the characteristics of AROE, practical considerations arose in terms of group dynamics. A level of heterogeneity is suggested, in order to ensure a good structure in group sessions when working with individuals who display challenging behaviour (Shechtman, 2004). Inviting an equal number of pupils with varying strengths to join the group would potentially help overcome issues of group composition and promote balanced group dynamics. Therefore, the schools were requested to identify ten KS3 pupils for each intervention group. Of these, five had to be randomly selected from the school population and five had to fulfil at least one of the selection criteria (Table 3-1).

Table 3-1. Criteria for selection

Criteria for selecting pupils AROE	
Criterion 1	Behaviour is causing serious concerns
Criterion 2	The pupil is on the at-risk register (if applicable)
Criterion 3	Previous history of exclusions
Criterion 4	The pupil's education is divided between mainstream and alternative provision for reasons related to social, emotional or behavioural difficulties

Once identified by their schools, pupils received letters inviting them and their parents to consider participating in the research project. The researcher carried out introductory meetings with all the potential participants to build rapport and answer questions before asking for formal consent. In total, nineteen pupils (N = 19) participated in the study and of them the majority (n = 16) were boys, with only three

girls. The participants attended years 9 ($n = 1$) and 8 ($n = 2$), with the majority attending year 7 ($n = 16$). Despite attempts to distribute pupils AROE and non-AROE equally, the final population consisted of 11 AROE and 8 non-AROE pupils. The AROE group consisted from ten boys and one girl, whereas the non-AROE group comprised of six boys and two girls. Finally, the group sizes varied from school to school with some having more participants than others ($n_1 = 8$, $n_2 = 6$, $n_3 = 5$).

In the last intervention session, participants were asked if they would like to be interviewed. Each school selected representatives of the AROE and non-AROE populations from those who volunteered. As a result, five pupils AROE and three pupils non-AROE were interviewed. The three co-facilitators were also invited for individual interviews with the aim of obtaining views from the school staff.

3.5 Ethical considerations

The current study was designed in line with ethical guidelines for educational and psychological research in the UK. Conducting research with children and young people is associated with a number of ethical principles that were taken into consideration to protect this vulnerable population. As Lindsay (2009) suggests, the use of ethical principles can function as a protector for the participants, which is also pertinent to the British Psychological Society's (2010) guidelines of minimising harm when conducting research. Moreover, according to the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (BPS, 2009), respect, competence, responsibility and integrity are fundamental areas within which psychological practice should take place.

Ethical approval for the current research was obtained from the University of East London on 14.02.2014 and a copy of the ethical approval form can be found in appendix 3. In addition, permission from the setting was obtained at an LA and at school level. Before the commencement of the study, a risk assessment took place, whereby any possible harm for the participants was identified and mitigated to ensure safety (Creswell, 2014a).

Deontological ethics (Bryman, 2012) were fundamental in this study and, therefore, obtaining informed consent from the participants prior to the start of the study was paramount. Following the identification of potential participants based on the selection criteria (listed in table 3-2.) the schools sent out envelopes to the pupils'

homes including an invitation letter and parent consent form (appendix 4), and a pupil invitation letter and consent form (appendix 5). Once written or verbal consent was given, the names of the participants were forwarded to the researcher.

A number of ethical guidelines were followed and, as per Fox, Martin and Green (2007), the language used was developmentally appropriate. The individuals and their parents/carers gave informed consent prior to their involvement, and were notified of their right to withdraw at any stage. The consent forms explained to potential participants and their parents/carers that all information would be confidential and anonymous (Mertens, 2010). The latter two concepts were presented using simplified language and examples to ensure that they would be easily understood by the readers. Lastly, it was reiterated that all information and discussion would remain confidential unless there were child protection concerns.

The invitation letters also explained the research purpose and the different stages of the study. The researcher used a deception-free approach, which allowed participants to become aware of the nature of the study (Robson, 2011). They were informed of the general principles of the intervention, the aspirations of the researcher and the evaluative nature of the study. Moreover, it was clearly stated that the study involved an interview stage for some participants and that for this purpose voice recorders would be used. All parties gave fully informed consent and with a single exception, all the pupils who received invitation letters agreed to participate.

The study adhered to the Data Protection Act (1998) and data were kept anonymised at all times using a coding system for each participant instead of their name, excluding all uniquely identifiable information. In addition, the participants and their parents/carers were informed that the data will be safely kept for up to two years, at which stage they will be destroyed.

Lastly, in accordance with the axiological values of the researcher, positive ethics permeated the study (Handelsman, Knapp & Gottlieb, 2009). As this framework suggests, the researcher was encouraged to develop self-awareness of personal and professional values. The researcher's feelings and motives were recognised and emphasised through the reflective diary, providing a compass for an ethically sensitive study.

3.6 Research design

As mentioned previously, in order to answer the research questions and fulfil the purpose of the present research, more than a single method is required. Thus, the researcher came to the conclusion that qualitative and quantitative methods were required. The researcher recognises that both qualitative and quantitative approaches have their own limitations and benefits. For this reason, utilising the strengths of each technique can provide a greater understanding of the world. That is not to say that these methods will be segregated; rather, they will together create an integrated single approach, which will be able to answer the wide range of research queries presented. The advantages of pragmatism and mixed methods were acknowledged by researchers who claim that contextual specificity and generalisation are both significant in research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). By using mixed methods, quantitative data can provide an extra advantage to the qualitative findings that typically cannot be generalised. In the same way, by including qualitative data, researchers can reveal deeper relationships for the quantitative findings (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005).

In terms of EP applications, the sole use of evidence-based randomised controlled trials has proven problematic in literature and qualitative research seems valuable and closely embedded in practice, sometimes leading to a paradigm of practice-based evidence (Fox, 2003; Fox, 2011). As such, Woolfson (2011) points out that in reality EPs are guided by scientific research, while using their personal knowledge and experience to ensure good practice.

3.6.1 Quantitative research

The quantitative research paradigm has predominantly been embraced by positivism which holds the view that observable phenomena are the source of knowledge (Robson, 2011). The overarching principle of positivism is objectivity (Fox, Martin & Green, 2007); as such, research should contain the use of measurable numerical findings. Previous findings inform the formulation of new variables which need to be verified or rejected by the findings (Creswell, 2014a). Quantitative studies aim to explain phenomena where there are strong elements of causality. Moreover, a significant priority for quantitative research is to produce generalisable findings, applicable to other similar populations (Bryman, 2012).

Validity and reliability are the cornerstones of good quality quantitative research, and should be addressed at various stages of the research. Validity in quantitative research is concerned to clarify whether the variables actually measure the construct they are designed to measure (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), whereas reliability looks to assess the consistency of the measurements (Robson, 2011). Reliability is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for a valid measurement. In the current study, both reliability and validity were ensured by selecting already published psychometric instruments.

Lastly, Creswell (2014b) identified five steps in the process of quantitative data collection that cover the wide range of issues considered in the initial stage of the research design. Specifically, he spoke about interlinked processes that include determining the sample, obtaining permission, defining the information that needs to be collected, selecting the measurement tools and, finally, administering them.

3.6.1.1 Data collection and measurements

A significant part of the research design was to define what data needs to be collected and how. According to the aforementioned literature, there is evidence supporting the notion that strength-based approaches can improve school related outcomes, wellbeing and can enhance the use of strengths for children and young people (Harter, 1998; Carpenter – Aeby & Kurtz, 2000; Turner, 2004; Austin, 2005; Gillum, 2005; Day-Vinez & Terriquez, 2008; Williamson, 2002; Zyomsky, Bryant, Deese & Gerler, 2008; Madden, Green & Grant, 2011; Proctor et al, 2011; Harris et al, 2012; German, 2013; Hughes, 2013). Therefore, the hypotheses formulated led to the identification of dependent variables that needed to be assessed. The strategies that were adopted were also positioned in relation to the research questions and encompassed the quantitative aspect of the study. The current study attempted to investigate the effect of a strength-based strategy on four variables; as such, the intervention was the independent variable and the four dependent variables were school engagement, life satisfaction, strengths and difficulties, and school attendance. For this reason, the use of questionnaires and data from school records were an integral part of this phase. Idiographic assessment measuring the improvement within the individual was considered appropriate; the following scales and records were used:

- The Student Engagement Instrument (Appleton, Christenson, Kim & Reschly, 2006).
- The Brief Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (Seligson, Huebner & Varlois, 2003).
- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman, 1997).
- Attendance figures (from the school register).

In order to assess potential change as a result of the intervention programme, these measures were administered twice, before the commencement and after the completion of the intervention. The first two scales were administered to the participants themselves and the third questionnaire was filled in by an adult in the school who knows the pupils well. This person was identified by the school and was either a year leader or a learning support assistant who worked closely with the pupil.

3.6.1.2 The instruments

The Student Engagement Instrument (SEI) is a 33-item, self-report scale for secondary pupils designed to assess cognitive and psychological engagement. Internal consistency reliability estimates were reported adequate, and the alpha values fluctuate between .88 and .72 (Frederickson & Baxter, 2009). Furthermore, significant correlations were found from an analysis of external validity with respect to predicting academic and behavioural outcomes (Appleton et al., 2006).

The SEI is used to assess psychological engagement and cognitive engagement for middle and high school level students. It can be broken into three factors relevant to psychological engagement, which are teacher/student relationships, peer support for learning, and family support for learning and two cognitive engagement factors, which are control and relevance of school work, and future aspirations and goals. There is also one subscale measuring intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

The Brief Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (BMSLSS) was developed as an alternative to the 40 item Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (Huebner, 1994). The BMSLSS has a self-report response format and is appropriate for individuals from 8 to 18 years old. It consists of six items and has a Chronbach's alpha value of .75 for internal consistency reliability. In terms of the

construct validity, when correlating BMLSS with adaptive coping styles, moderate correlations were found between life satisfaction and positive attitudes ($r = .355$). The baseline measurements for SEI and the BMSLS took place in the first meeting with the pupils, before giving them substantial information about what they would be doing in the sessions. The measures were also administered at the end of the last intervention session, and were returned to the researcher.

The SDQ was devised by Goodman (1997) and is a 25-question scale that can be administered to the child, their teacher, or his/her parent. The questionnaire consists of five scales and each scale has five items. The scales measure emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity, peer problems, and prosocial behaviour. The scores range from 0 to 10 and the total difficulties score is calculated when generating the sums of all the scales, apart from the prosocial scale. Scores are divided into three bands, namely normal, borderline, and abnormal (Scores for the SDQ teacher version Table 3-2).

The internal consistency and test-retest reliability were reported as satisfactory, with scores of .73 and .62 respectively (Goodman, 2001). In order to ensure data triangulation (Robson, 2011), the SDQ was administered to school staff who worked closely with the pupils and had a clear picture of their overall functioning at school. This was considered essential in order to discover possible improvements at the school level and include the perceptions of key staff.

Table 3-2. Scores for the SDQ teacher version

	Normal	Borderline	Abnormal
Total Difficulties score	0-11	12-15	16-40
Emotional Symptoms score	0-4	5	6-10
Conduct Problems score	0-2	3	4-10
Hyperactivity Score	0-5	6	7-10
Peer Problems score	0-3	4	5-10
Prosocial Behaviour score	6-10	5	0-4

3.6.2 Qualitative research

A theoretical lens is a key feature of qualitative research where the researcher typically collects information from the participants and tries to formulate categories which can lead to patterns or theories (Creswell, 2014a). It tends to draw information through interviews, observation and documents, and is usually a collaborative approach between the researcher and the participants. Interpretation and understanding are central to this approach (Bryman, 2012). The five steps for data collection should incorporate the initial identification of the participants, gaining full consent, collecting the data, recording the data to organise the information and, finally, maintaining sensitivity to the research context (Creswell, 2014b).

Bryman (2012) presented two criteria in qualitative research evaluation, namely *trustworthiness* and *authenticity*. Furthermore, issues of reliability and validity are linked with data consistency and specificity (Creswell, 2014a); however, for the

production of an accurate piece of qualitative research these two are not sufficient (Creswell & Plano Clark 2011). In order to fulfil accuracy, the researcher ensured data triangulation by collecting information from pupils themselves and from their form tutors, who knew pupils well. This strategy was also employed to reduce *participant bias* (Robson, 2011), given that the participants had worked closely with and were familiar to the person who interviewed them. Several precautions were taken to minimise potential researcher bias. These included the use of a reflective diary, utilising voice recorders and ensuring that the transcription of the data would be reviewed by a second individual who was not familiar with the research aims. These were steps taken with a view to eradicate bias and ensure trustworthiness. In keeping with Beaver's guidelines (2011), interviews were used in the current study to collect information about how the individuals perceived and made sense of the intervention.

3.6.2.1 The interview schedules

Creswell (2014b) suggests that several points need to be taken into consideration when conducting interviews, which informed the interview preparation for the current study.. Firstly, the researcher requested school staff to identify participants representing both AROE and non-AROE populations. In addition, the three co-facilitators were identified as interviewees, as their contribution could be illuminating in terms of school perceptions. Since the researcher's endeavour was to elicit information and gather views without guiding the participants towards any direction, semi-structured interviews were used. They were identified as the most suitable strategy deriving from pragmatic principles, which value freedom and democracy, while endorsing theory and empiricism (Robson, 2011).

Semi-structured interviews lie in the middle of a continuum between structured and unstructured interviews and as such tend to fit into flexible designs. They are also expected to provide good balance between having an interview schedule to shape the overall discussion and avoiding rigidity, and help to confer a natural flow to the discussion that was formulated by the interviewee's responses and interests (Smith & Eatough, 2007). The use of this process is thought to promote the child's active participation, as has been highlighted by Gersch (1992). The involvement of the individual was regarded as a valuable source of information, a way to empower

children's decision making, and an ethical tool to protecting the children's rights. In addition, triangulating the children's views with information from school staff is in line with EP responsibilities of evaluating services and informing future practice based on their feedback (Gersch, 2004).

The interview schedules (Appendices 6 and 7) were devised using guidelines from Smith and Osborn (2008) who pointed out the main features of semi-structured interviews , as follows:

- Building rapport with the interviewee is important.
- It is not absolutely essential to order the questions in a particular format.
- Prompting can be used according to the areas of discussion that arise from the participant.

In line with Smith, Flower and Larkin (2009), the interview schedule was based on the research questions and various kinds of questions were employed to cover a wide range of aspects of the topic. *Descriptive questions* (e.g., "Could you tell me how you experienced the sessions?") and *contrast questions* (e.g., "Thinking about before you started the sessions, has anything changed as a result of the project?") were adopted for both the children's and the adults' schedules. In addition, *evaluative questions* were seen as very pertinent to the research questions and therefore were used in on several occasions (e.g., "What did you find helpful?"). *Circular questions* were used for the adult interview schedule, as a means to unravel their impression of the pupils' perceptions (e.g., "Do you think that the sessions helped the pupils change their mind about themselves?"). Lastly *prompts* and *probes* were used to encourage more in depth information and clarify meaning.

Although Smith and Osborn (2008) pointed some disadvantages when conducting semi-structured interviews, such as the fact they can be time consuming, harder to analyse, and the researcher has limited control over the interviewing process, the approach was adopted to promote the participants' voice and interests overall by offering them the power to affect the direction of the interview.

3.6.2.2 The interview process

Individual semi-structured interviews took place in July 2014. The researcher interviewed eight participants and three members of staff. All the interview sessions were held in the school setting, with one exception, because one facilitator was not able to be at school due to health reasons. This interview was conducted by telephone at a pre-agreed time. The interviews were arranged to take place in quiet areas to minimise disruptions and ensure that the participants would feel at ease to give their honest opinions. Each participant was interviewed willingly and they were all thanked for their contribution at the end of the interview. The interviews ranged from 10 to 25 minutes and the questions used for the participants were similar to those used for the three co-facilitators. Dictaphones were used to record the interviews verbatim and ensure that the researcher had an accurate record of what had been discussed (Creswell, 2014b).

Initially the interview schedules involved broad questions relevant to the overall experience of the intervention (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Prompts and explanations were offered when required to ensure comprehension and flow in the discussion. Due to time constraints it was not possible to pilot the interview schedule to matching participants prior to the actual interviews. It was instead assessed by two experienced EPs who then offered feedback to enhance the researcher's interviewing performance (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Advance preparation considering possible scenarios and ways the interview might develop proved to be very effective in promoting the researcher's confidence, as was indicated by Smith and Eatough (2007).

3.6.3 A mixed method approach

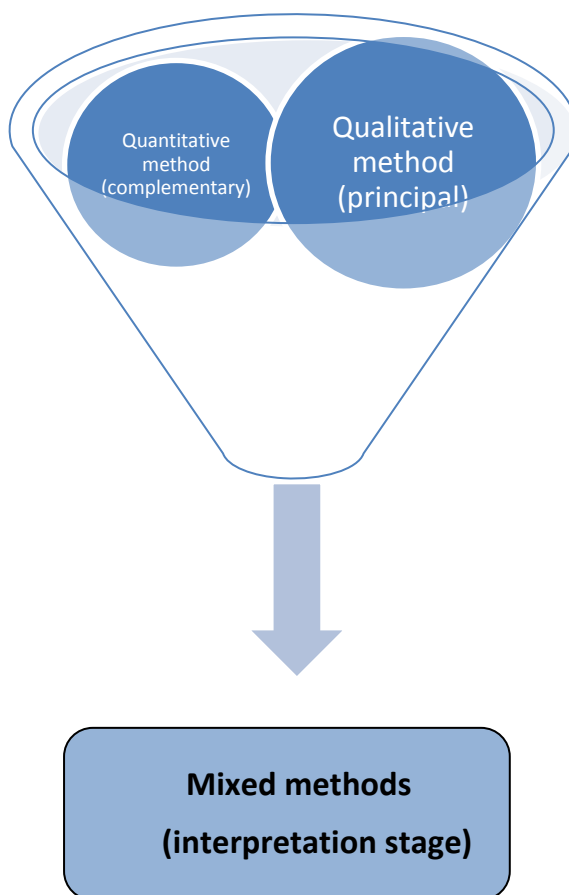
Qualitative and quantitative methods complement each other (Fox, Martin & Green, 2007), and combining them offers a more complete understanding of the research case (Creswell, 2014a). In the current study, this wider viewpoint is vital in order to reveal the benefits of strength-based strategies and how to best use them in the future. In light of the merits of mixed methodology, the researcher identified it as the most suitable approach for the research design. Also known as multi-strategy design (Robson, 2011), mixed methodology aims to combine the benefits of the two methods and provide information in terms of outcome as well as process, while allowing for

triangulation. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) attempted to define mixed methods research and concluded that it needs to contain the following elements.

- Rigorous and accurate data collection.
- Combination of the two methods and definition of the principal method (if any).
- The research to take into account philosophical underpinnings.
- The two methods together to be used as an overarching guide to the design.

These principles informed the current study and in particular the following steps were followed. Initially, a quantitative method was used to explore how helpful strength-based techniques can be for pupils who are AROE and those who are not. The second phase consisted of a qualitative study which aimed to discover which techniques worked best for pupils. Therefore, in terms of priority and sequence decisions (Fox, Martin & Green, 2007), the principal method was the qualitative section and the complementary method comprised the quantitative part, while in terms of sequencing, the timing was concurrent, and both quantitative and qualitative methods were implemented in one phase. This *convergent parallel mixed methods design* (Creswell, 2014a) allowed for an initial general examination through the quantitative analysis stage and an in depth qualitative investigation that explained in more detail the quantitative results. Once the two sets of data were analysed, the two strands were mixed during the interpretation stage (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) and the two separate methods were combined in the discussion (Figure 3-1). It was anticipated that the data may reveal contradictions or congruence between the findings of the two approaches.

Figure 3-1: The convergent parallel mixed methods design demonstrating the principal and complementary methods.



3.7 The intervention

3.7.1 The design

In line with the study's aim, the researcher had to use a strength-based intervention for young people. After contacting authors of various positive psychology programmes and researching relevant publications, a decision was made to create a new programme by merging and adapting activities from various interventions, while also designing some new ones. As such, the main principles of positive psychology and strength-based interventions were incorporated to design a new programme. Rather than working on a particular existing publication, the underpinning philosophy of focusing on positives permeated the programme's structure and core, resulting in a comprehensive and concise intervention. The strength-based tenet was maintained intact and three interventions were harnessed as templates. As a result of this, the programme

includes a constellation of various techniques and activities which were adapted or newly devised.

To begin with, three programmes were identified as the most suitable for the particular research purpose. The StrengthsGym (Proctor & Fox Eades, 2009), the StrengthsExplorer (Gallup Youth Development Specialists, 2007) and the Strength Cards (Deal, Holton, Jones & Mellberg, 2009) acknowledge the importance of recognising and celebrating strengths and propose various activities and routines within these frameworks. These programmes were selected on the basis of the following three factors: they apply to the age group of the current study, they are widely used in literature and they were user-friendly. The researcher carefully selected and adapted certain activities from these programmes to ensure that the material would fit best with the purpose and setup of the sessions. Furthermore, amendments were carried in accordance with the schools' facilities and timeframes, as well as individual differences. Each of the aforementioned programmes follows a different classification of strengths and personal qualities; however, they do overlap and present similarities, as they are guided by the same principles.

In addition to offering to schools a short-term targeted intervention programme, the researcher considered it essential to provide them with a sustainable plan to consistently use positive psychology principles in the school environment after the completion of the study (Linley, Joseph, Maltby, Harrington, 2009). As such, a decision was made to use a co-facilitator from the school staff who would ensure that knowledge and practices will remain in the setting after the end of the intervention, and pupils will experience a greater association between the intervention programme and their school life. Moreover, there is evidence suggesting that positive psychology perceptions can be beneficial for the efficacy beliefs of school staff (Crinchley & Gibbs, 2012).

Broad guidelines to designing an intervention programme were taken into consideration. In particular, the researcher focused on issues of *treatment strength* and *treatment integrity* (Cordray & Pion, 2006). These two notions are inextricably linked to treatment effectiveness, and are concerned with the theoretical background and the consistent implementation of the plan respectively. The researcher ensured that the three prerequisites for treatment fidelity were present in the project: a hard copy of the plan was put together, rigorous adherence checks took place, and frequent supervision sessions were used as guidance for the process. Regarding creating an effective group,

the design involved reciprocal, open communication, and equal distribution of participation (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). The main goals were clarified as early as possible in the start of the programme and the participants were engaged in decision making. Moreover, in collaboration with the schools, the six steps suggested by Benson (2010) were followed at the design stage of the intervention:

- i. An initial rationale and justification for the need to work in a group.
- ii. Identifying the group members.
- iii. Programming the group and ensuring that facilities are available.
- iv. Leading the group and determining who will be the key person(s) in charge.
- v. Presenting the group and informing all parties about their responsibilities.
- vi. Planning the first session and moving to practical application of the plan.

In terms of strength-based practice, the main theoretical principles, alongside recommendations from previous studies, were used. Specifically, Bozic (2013) outlined several ways of using strengths in an intervention, among which are positive reframing, eliciting, and harnessing strengths as a means to tackle difficulties and improve a positive sense of self.

3.7.2 The process

The three schools were asked to nominate professionals to work as co-facilitators of the intervention. The professionals' job titles were Assistant Manager of Behaviour, Inclusion Curriculum Coordinator and Pupil Premium Learning Support Assistant. They were selected for their in-depth knowledge and experience of managing challenging pupils, their insight of the school systems and having a positive work history with several of the potential participants. After meeting with the professionals and obtaining their agreement, meticulous training commenced to ensure quality and consistency in intervention practice. This included sessions where step by step guidance on the programme was given and the co-facilitators used role play to practise some activities. In addition, they were provided with the material in advance and had the opportunity to discuss anything that seemed unclear.

After negotiating with schools, it was agreed that the five sessions would be spread out across five weeks where possible. A quiet area and specific time were identified in advance to avoid practical difficulties and ensure smoothness. All the resources were provided by the researcher. Prior to starting the programme, the two facilitators came to an agreement as to who would be the leader for each session. As a rule, three sessions were run by the researcher and two by the school staff. This approach was considered suitable to minimise researcher bias (Gluud, 2006) by ensuring that the focus of the final evaluation would be placed on the intervention, rather than on the facilitator.

The sessions were held in the summer term of 2014. Due to student commitments (e.g., exams and sports days), some sessions were postponed to a later date, which resulted in different start and finish dates for the sessions in each school. School staff proactively reminded pupils about the following sessions to avoid confusion and ensure participation. Despite having obtained parental and individual consent, the pupils were frequently reminded that it was their choice to participate and that they had to follow the school rules at all times.

A very significant aspect of the intervention process was differentiation based on individual needs. Despite obtaining information about the pupils at the design stage, meeting with them and acknowledging areas of difficulty resulted in an ongoing process of differentiating activities to enable their access to the programme (DfE, 2013c). Visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic materials were used as much as possible, while a variety of approaches was employed, including drama activities and art. Diagrams and structured resources were on offer for individuals who struggled with abstract meaning (e.g., a pupil with an Autism Spectrum Disorder) and IT resources were used to ensure access for pupils who found handwriting particularly hard. Lastly, the two facilitators worked as readers and scribes whenever necessary.

3.8 The pilot study

A trial of approach schedule, in the form of an individual session, took place in April 2014 with the purpose of assessing the suitability of the activities and producing valuable learnings prior to the onset of the study. According to Robson (2011), piloting helps prevent problems that tend to derive from the application of a theoretical design in

the real world. Sections of the intervention schedule were piloted with an 11 year old student who agreed to participate in the procedure. Additionally, parental consent was obtained in advance. A copy of the pilot feedback form is included as an appendix (appendix 8) and the pilot study included three sections

- i. Introduction and explanation of the process.
- ii. Trial of the material and the activities.
- iii. Feedback and elicitation of the pupil's views regarding the overall experience.

The key points from the feedback provided valuable insight and helped inform further programme development. In particular, the participant described the programme as interesting, enjoyable, and with good flow. In terms of accessing the material, the pupil thought that the activities were easily understood and speculated that pupils of his age would have no difficulty engaging with the activities. This meant that the language level used in the intervention would be age appropriate.

However, some recommendations and potential pitfalls were mentioned. More specifically, the pupil explained that it would be helpful if the adult could initially provide individual explanations of each strength's meaning. This would ideally take place at the beginning, when presenting the grid with the 24 strengths. Moreover, the pupil seemed confused when interchangeable terminology was used (e.g., strengths, talents, themes) and seemed to prefer a single term for strengths. An example of a session of the revised intervention schedule can be found in appendix 9. (The whole of the intervention programme and the activity sheets can be made available to anyone interested, by directly contacting the researcher.)

3.9 Data analysis

3.9.1 Quantitative analysis

Before the onset of the analysis, a reliability analysis was run to calculate cronbach's alpha and check the scale's consistency across what it measures (Field, 2005). The acceptable cut-off point for reliabilities is reported to be .7, however it was anticipated that due to the small number of participants some reliabilities could not reach this level. To verify or reject the research hypotheses, the quantitative phase then included comparisons of the means, using parametric and nonparametric tests. This

decision was based on certain criteria that the data need to fulfil in order to select one method or the other, so the data were checked for normal distribution before the analysis; when there was normal distribution, a *t*-test (parametric test) was selected, whereas when this criterion was not fulfilled, the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test (non-parametric test) was opted for instead. According to Mertens (2010), comparison of the means is the most appropriate method when comparing scores within participant groups (correlated samples) and can be used in the current study to determine the effects of the intervention. For ease of comparison, mixed Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to reveal differences between the two groups (AROE and non-AROE) for the two different times. Due to the small sample size and the allocation of the participants into two groups, there is low expectation of a statistically significant finding when comparing the two means, that would produce inferential statistics for the general population. Rather, an overall direction and general indication was anticipated. However, there is literature suggesting that *t*-tests can be used for small samples ($N < 5$) if the within-pair correlations are high (De Winter, 2013).

3.9.2 Qualitative analysis

The interview transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis and this comprised the qualitative analysis of the current study. Boyatzis (1993) describes thematic analysis as a process for encoding qualitative information which enables the translation of the information. In line with the study's design and aims, thematic analysis has some advantages which are outlined as follows. It can summarise important features of the data set, it is an easily accessible technique for the audience, while findings from this analysis can inform policy development (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The eventual aim is to discover themes which adequately reflect the data via a thorough and in depth analysis (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). The researcher followed guidelines from Braun and Clarke (2006) who provided a six step guide to completing the analysis (Table 3-3). The themes were explored in detail to discover the most relevant and beneficial aspects of the intervention as perceived by pupils and staff, as well as their overall experiences of it. Thematic analysis is flexible and can be used for a variety of epistemological principles, including the pragmatic paradigm. Focus is

placed on implicit and explicit ideas, known as themes, which guide the analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012).

Table 3-3. A step-by-step guide to thematic analysis by Braun & Clarke (2006)

	Phase title	Description
Phase 1	Becoming familiar with the data	Transcription, checking material for accuracy, reading and re-reading the data to formulate preliminary ideas or codes
Phase 2	Generating initial codes	Coding features according to theory and researcher's interest, grouping similar codes together
Phase 3	Searching for themes	Sorting the initial codes into candidate sub-themes and overarching themes
Phase 4	Reviewing themes	Refining the themes, checking if they work in relation to the data set, and creating a thematic map
Phase 5	Defining and naming themes	Identifying the essence and the meaning of each theme, making sense of the story behind the themes, and being able to describe each theme
Phase 6	Producing the report	Provide an account of the data, using examples or extracts to produce an analytic narrative

In order to determine the direction and nature of theory in relation to the data, Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest three pivotal decisions. Deciding upon an inductive or a deductive analysis was the first step. Typically, in inductive analysis the researcher will harness the data to provide new insights and help explore an area, whereas

deductive analysis aims to use existing theory and research with a view to develop new theories, suggesting that the formulation of themes can be informed from prior research, existing theory, or from the data themselves (Boyatzis, 1998; Bryman, 2012). Given that the current study's research focus was heavily informed by previous literature it seemed logical to adopt a theory-driven deductive approach (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall & McCulloch, 2011), where the researcher developed the initial codes based on existing theory. The research aims and questions were influential to the coding stage and as such the study's direction could also be described as an integrative structural approach (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall & McCulloch, 2011). Nevertheless, the researcher anticipated that the data themselves would reveal additional new codes and were therefore examined repeatedly for potential areas of importance, to reveal new meanings which would extend the findings above and beyond existing theory (Thorne, 2000). Furthermore, when selecting between semantic or latent thematic identification, the researcher decided to adhere to the former approach where meanings are conceptualised through an explicit, rather than an interpretive stance. Focusing on this level seemed in line with the descriptive aims of the qualitative section. Congruent with this, the final decision regarding the epistemological nature of the analysis, led to adopting an essentialist - realist approach. This was also inextricably linked to the overall epistemological nature of the study and was looking to explore individual experiences instead of the underlying contexts which influence the perceptions.

In terms of following the six steps of thematic analysis in the current study, the researcher initially ensured that transcripts were thorough and of high quality (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Due to time constraints the researcher outsourced the material to an external professional, after ensuring for data protection. However, repeated and meaningful reading and listening of the material, amid several checks and corrections to the transcribed material resulted in a high level of familiarity with the data set (Phase 1). During phase 2, the researcher adopted a complete coding approach and all data was believed to be potentially relevant to the scientific enquiry (Braun & Clarke, 2013). To promote rigour, the researcher decided to carry out the coding process twice, since it was felt that repetition would result in a more thorough analysis. Keeping in mind the general consensus that codes are labels with symbolic meaning that help categorise the data (Saldana 2009; Creswell 2013; Miles, Huberman & Saldana 2014) the researcher generated a code book (appendix 10) which enabled monitoring of the findings. An example of a coded transcript can be found in appendix 11. In addition, once the codes

were assigned to data, one external researcher (a trainee colleague) reviewed the codes against particular data to check consistency and consensus (Stiles, 1993), to ensure eventual interpretive convergence (Saldana, 2009). The following stage of identifying patterns into the codes (phase 3) led to discovering potential categories (phase 4) which were revised and reviewed to produce tentative sub-themes and themes (see Appendix 12 for examples of the analysis). Themes are described as broad patterns where codes are incorporated to create an overarching idea (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Creswell, 2013). As such, the researcher labelled and outlined the themes as deeper and coherent ideas (phase 5) which allowed for the write-up of the study (phase 6).

3.10 Chapter summary

This chapter aimed to provide an overview of the research design, highlighting theoretical and practical components, located within a pragmatic framework. Using guidelines from the most recent literature on methodology of research, the researcher's principles and procedures were outlined. Ethical issues were addressed and a critical stance towards data collection and analysis were adopted as an attempt to minimise bias. The next chapter will provide an analysis of the data and present the findings.

4 Findings

4.1 Introduction to chapter

The previous chapter provided a detailed outline of the methodology, including the research questions and techniques employed to gather data. This chapter will provide an overview of the findings generated by the quantitative and qualitative data. Initially, the quantitative findings will be described, including the reliability analysis, the paired samples tests and the repeated measures comparisons of within group means. This will be followed by a presentation of the qualitative findings from the thematic analysis, with extracts from the interviews incorporated into an analytic narrative. In the final section of this chapter, the findings and the research questions will be combined.

4.2 Quantitative findings

In order to investigate the effect of the intervention on participants, statistical analyses of the data were conducted in August 2014 using SPSS v. 22.0. Information from the pre- (Time 1) and post- (Time 2) questionnaires was obtained to measure life satisfaction, attendance, school engagement, and strengths and difficulties. In order to test the four research hypotheses and explore any potential impact of the intervention, it was essential to compare the means between the groups to reveal the effect of the intervention on all participants, and then conduct comparisons within the groups to check whether being AROE affected the outcome of the intervention. The former goal was achieved using *t*-tests (parametric) and Wilcoxon Signed Rank tests (non-parametric), based on criteria described in the previous chapter, while for the later analysis, a mixed Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted.

4.2.1 Reliability analysis

The need to calculate the consistency of the scales and to confirm that they measure the constructs they claim they are, led to a reliability analysis. Table 4-1 summarises the reliability information for each scale with a 95% confidence interval (CI), including each scale's mean (M) and number of items. Most of the reliabilities are above the acceptable cut-off point of .7 (Field, 2005). Chronbach's alpha values (α) for the scales range between .724 and .971 demonstrating strong internal consistency.

Table 4-1: Dimensions, reliability indexes, means and number of items per scale.

Dimensions	Time1			Time2	
	chronbach's			chronbach's	
	α			α	
	(95% CI)	M	Items (n)	(95% CI)	M
Life Satisfaction Scale	.724	4.061	6	.848	3.939
School Engagement Instrument	.941	2.928	35	.971	2.920
Teacher-student relationships	.912	2.626	9	.948	2.649
Peer support	.662	3.132	6	.896	3.035
Family support	.822	3.263	4	.948	3.250
Control of school work	.900	3.824	9	.916	2.871
Future aspirations	.843	3.263	5	.846	3.200
Extrinsic motivation	.488	2.553	2	.834	2.658
Strengths &Difficulties Questionnaire	.798	.832	25	.762	.823

Dimensions	Time1			Time2	
	chronbach's			chronbach's	
	α			α	
	(95% CI)	M	Items (n)	(95% CI)	M
Total difficulties	.913	.768	20	.896	.732
Emotional symptoms	.662	.526	5	.857	.484
Conduct symptoms	.748	.726	5	.859	.811
Hyperactivity	.892	1.124	5	.869	1.126
Peer problems	.704	.579	5	.652	.505
Prosocial behaviour	.884	1.084	5	.860	1.189

4.2.2 Comparison of means for paired samples

Before the actual analysis, tests for normality of the scale variables were carried out. Where appropriate, non-parametric analyses were conducted, and in particular the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test for related samples. For all other cases, *t*-tests were used.

A paired samples *t*-test was conducted to compare Life Satisfaction levels before and after the intervention. There was no significant difference in the scores for Time 1 Life Satisfaction ($M=4.06$, $SD=0.52$) and Time 2 Life Satisfaction ($M=3.98$, $SD=0.74$), $t(18)=1.04$, $p>.05$. A non-parametric test was used to compare Attendance. The Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for related samples revealed no significant difference on attendance levels as a result of the intervention ($Z=97.000$, $p>.05$)

In terms of Student Engagement, the six subscales were compared separately: Teacher-student relationships, Peer support for learning, Family support for learning,

Control and relevance of school work, Future aspirations and Extrinsic motivation subscales for Time 1 and Time 2 were compared. The *t*-test analysis showed no statistical difference in Teacher-student relationship between Time 1 ($M=2.62$, $SD=0.66$) and Time 2 ($M=2.64$, $SD=0.66$), $t(18)=-0.15$, $p>.05$. Similarly, the analysis for peer support did not reveal statistically significant difference before ($M=3.131$, $SD=0.15$) and after ($M=3.06$, $SD=0.56$) the intervention, $t(18)=0.501$, $p>.05$. Non-parametric tests revealed that there was no significant difference for family support ($Z=46.500$, $p>.05$), control of school work ($Z=67.500$, $p>.05$) or for future aspirations ($Z=39.500$, $p>.05$) as a result of the intervention. Finally, the levels of extrinsic motivation did not display significant difference before ($M=2.55$, $SD=0.71$) and after the intervention ($M=2.65$, $SD=0.92$), $t(18)=-0.59$, $p>.05$.

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) includes a Total difficulties score and comprises five subscales: the Emotional symptoms scale, the Conduct problems scale, the Hyperactivity scale, the Peer problem scale, and the Prosocial scale. The former four subscales are used to calculate the Total difficulties score. The *t*-test analysis revealed that the intervention did not cause statistically significant difference on the difficulties displayed by pupils as reflected by pre ($M=15.36$, $SD=8.9$) and post measures ($M=14.63$, $SD=7.68$), $t(18)=.781$, $p>.05$. No significant difference was also found for emotional symptoms ($Z=34.000$, $p>.05$), for conduct symptoms ($Z=72.000$, $p>.05$), for hyperactivity ($Z=39.000$, $p>.05$) and for peer problems ($Z=38.000$, $p>.05$). Lastly, no difference was noted for the prosocial skills of the participants as measured before ($M= 5.42$, $SD=2.75$) and after the intervention ($M=5.94$, $SD=2.19$), $t(18)=-1.34$, $p>.05$.

4.2.3 Comparison of means within groups (repeated measures)

The second stage of analysis included a mixed ANOVA between and within the subjects to compare scores between pupils AROE and non-AROE across two time periods (Time 1 and Time 2). Levene's test of equality of error variances was used to check whether sphericity is assumed and inform the researcher about which test should be selected. If the test showed that the error variance was equal across the groups, then sphericity was assumed; alternatively, the Greenhouse-Geisser test was used. **Error!**

Reference source not found. contains information about the comparisons between the means of the two subgroups of students.

Analysis of variance showed no statistically significant difference at the $p > .05$ level in life satisfaction scores for the students, $F(1,17) = 1.651$, and the interaction effect between life satisfaction and exclusion was not statistically significant, $F(1,17) = 2.00$, $p > .05$ reflecting that life satisfaction did not change as a result of the intervention for the two groups. Additionally, being AROE or not AROE did not seem to affect changes in life satisfaction, $F(1,17) = 1.71$, $p > .05$ (Table 4-2).

Table 4-2. Mean scores between the two groups for the pre- (Time1) and post- (Time2) measurements of Life Satisfaction Scale.

	Pupils non AROE	Pupils AROE
	(N=11)	(N=8)
Variable	Mean	Mean
Life satisfaction1	3.896	4.182
Life satisfaction 2	3.583	4.197

The mixed ANOVA showed that the difference in attendance between Time 1 and Time 2 was not statistically significant $F(1, 17) = .877$ $p > 0.05$. The interaction effect between attendance and exclusion status was not statistically significant, $F(1,17) = .197$, $p > 0.05$ indicating that there was no difference in the change in attendance between Time 1 and Time 2 for the two groups. The group effect of being AROE or non-AROE on attendance was not significant overall, $F(1, 17) = 3.39$, $p > 0.05$ (Table 4-3).

Table 4-3. Mean scores between the two groups for the pre- (Time1) and post- (Time2) measurements of Attendance.

	Pupils non AROE	Pupils AROE
	(N=11)	(N=8)
Variable	Mean	Mean
Attendance1	96.730	93.424
Attendance2	96.284	93.265

The subscales of the Student Engagement Instrument were analysed (Table 4-4). In terms of perceived teacher student relationship, no significant difference was found for the pupils as a result of the intervention, $F(1,17)=.092$, $p>.05$. In addition, there was no significant interaction between teacher-student relationship and exclusion status, $F(1,17)=.915$, $p>.05$ and the main effect comparing the two groups of pupils was not significant, $F(1,17)= 1.48$, $p>.05$.

Peer support did not seem to be significantly affected by the intervention for the pupils, $F(1,17)=.120$, $p>.05$ and the interaction between peer support and being AROE or not was not significant either, $F(1,17)=.871$, $p>.05$. When comparing the two groups, there was no statistically significant difference in the comparison of peer support before and after the intervention, $F(1,17)= .149$.

Similarly, the analysis for family support did not show any significance for the pupils, $F(1,17)= .002$, $p>.05$ and the interaction of each subgroup, and the family support difference was not significant either $F(1,17)=0.27$, $p>.05$. When looking within the subjects, there was no significant difference for the two groups of pupils, $F(1,17)=.064$, $p>.05$. Although the mean scores for pupils AROE seemed to marginally increase, the scores for non-AROE pupils showed a slight decrease.

In terms of the pupils' perception of their control of school work, no significant difference was noted for the individuals in total $F(1,17)=.027$, $p>.05$. The effect of the interaction of control of school work and exclusion status was not significant, $F(1,17)=.007$, $p>.05$ and being AROE or non-AROE did not seem to affect the pupils' perception of, $F(1,17)= .121$.

Table 4-4. Mean scores between the two groups for the pre- (Time1) and post- (Time2) measurements of the Student Engagement Instrument subscales.

	Pupils non AROE	Pupils AROE
	(N=11)	(N=8)
Variable	Mean	Mean
Teacher-student1	2.319	2.848
Teacher-student2	2.514	2.747
Peer support1	3.000	3.227
Peer support2	3.083	3.045
Family support1	3.250	3.273
Family support2	3.188	3.318
Control of school work1	2.917	2.788
Control of school work2	2.931	2.828
Future aspirations1	3.275	3.273
Future aspirations2	3.125	3.273
Extrinsic motivation1	2.188	2.818
Extrinsic motivation2	2.375	2.864

When comparing pupils' future aspirations before and after the intervention, no significant difference was revealed, $F(1,17)=.222$, $p>.05$ and there was no significant effect of time on future aspirations, $F(1,17)=.222$, $p>.05$. The main effect comparing the two subgroups was not significant, $F(1,17)=.049$, $p>.05$, suggesting that there was no difference in future aspirations between pupils AROE and non-AROE.

Extrinsic motivation levels did not seem to differ significantly from Time 1 to Time 2, $F(1,17)=.399$, $p>.05$ and the effect of time on extrinsic motivation was not significant, $F(1,17)=.149$, $p>.05$. Individual effects of exclusion status did not seem to be associated with differences in extrinsic motivation $F(1,17)=.145$, $p>.05$.

The subscales of the SDQ were analysed using the same statistical method (Table 4-5). Total difficulties, as reported by school staff, did not present a significant

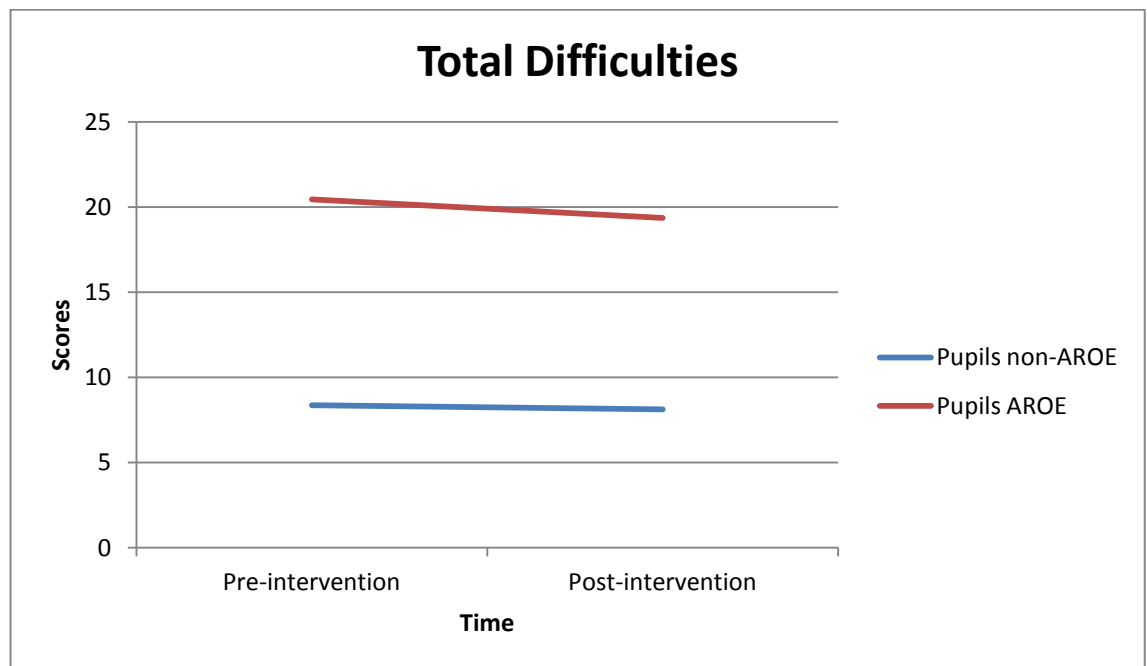
difference before and after the intervention, $F(1,17)=.471$, $p>.05$ and the effect of time on the variable was not statistically significant, $F(1,17)=.185$, $p>.05$. However, when comparing the two subgroups, it was found that there is a statistically significant difference for the pupils AROE and non-AROE, $F(1,17)=19.787$, $p<.05$. More specifically, pupils AROE reported a much greater decrease in their total difficulties from Time 1 ($M=20.455$) to Time 2 ($M=19.364$) than did pupils non-AROE before ($M=8.375$) and after ($M=8.125$) the intervention (Figure 4-1). This suggests that the intervention was more beneficial for pupils AROE in terms of minimising their overall difficulties.

Table 4-5. Mean scores between the two groups for the pre- (Time1) and post- (Time2) measurements for the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire subscales.

	Pupils non AROE	Pupils AROE
	(N=11)	(N=8)
Variable	Mean	Mean
Total difficulties1	8.375*	20.455*
Total difficulties2	8.125*	19.364*
Emotional symptoms1	1.500*	3.455*
Emotional symptoms2	1.375*	3.182*
Conduct problems1	1.500*	5.182*
Conduct problems2	1.625*	5.818*
Hyperactivity1	4.125	7.727
Hyperactivity2	3.625	7.091
Peer problems1	1.250*	4.091*
Peer problems2	1.500*	3.273*
Prosocial behaviour1	1.250	4.091
Prosocial behaviour2	1.500	3.273

Key: N=19, * $p<.05$

Figure 4-1. Graph presenting how Total Difficulties scores fluctuated for the two subgroups before and after the intervention.

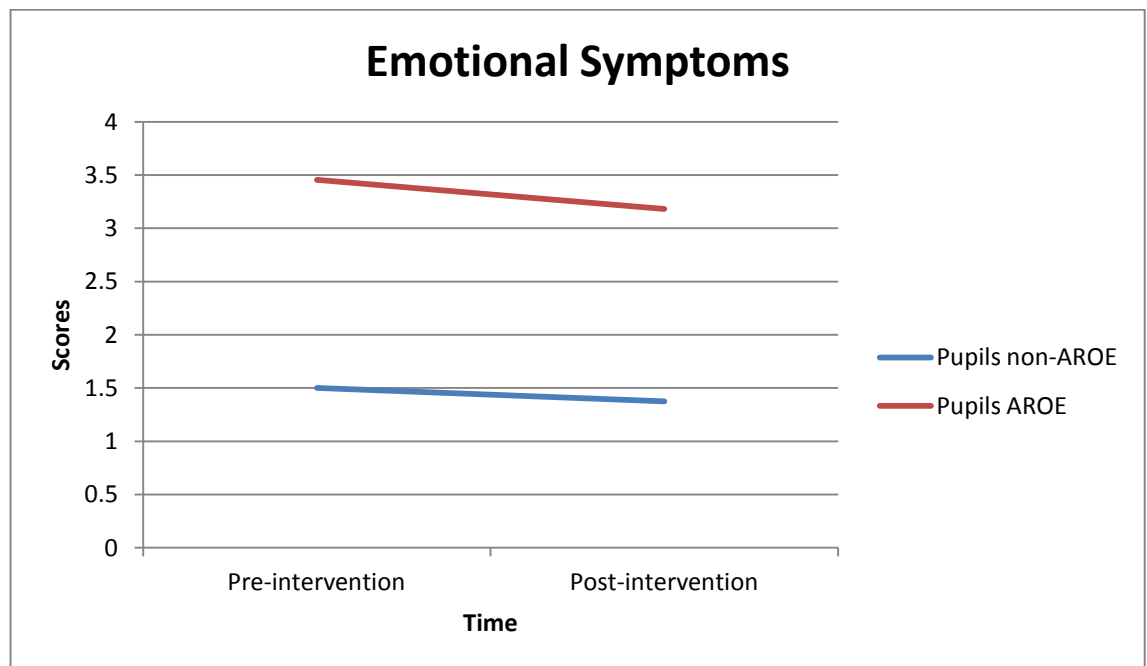


The emotional symptoms of the participants did not seem to differ significantly, $F(1,17)=2.04$, $p>.05$ and the effect of time on emotional symptoms was not significant, $F(1,17)=.028$, $p>.05$. The difference between the two groups was statistically significant, $F(1,17)=4.502$, $p<.05$, suggesting that pupils AROE showed greater improvement, as reflected by school staff reports (Figure 4-2).

The analysis showed that pupils' conduct symptoms did not differ significantly when comparing pre- and post- scores, $F(1,17)=1.289$, $p>.05$, and the effect of time was not significant, $F(1,17)=.581$, $p>.05$. Surprisingly, when comparing the two groups, it was revealed that pupils AROE has a significantly greater deterioration in terms of conduct behaviour, than pupils non AROE, $F(1,17)=17.764$, $p<.05$.

School staff scores regarding hyperactivity revealed no significant difference for the whole group, $F(1,17)= 1.679$, $p>.05$ and the time effect was not significant, $F(1,17)=.024$, $p>.05$. Although between subjects comparisons revealed that both subgroups improved in terms of hyperactivity when comparing pre- and post- scores, the difference between the groups was significant, $F(1,17)=11.464$, $p>.05$ and pupils AROE seemed to have improved more ($M_1=7.727$, $M_2=7.091$) than pupils non AROE ($M_1=4.125$, $M_2=3.625$).

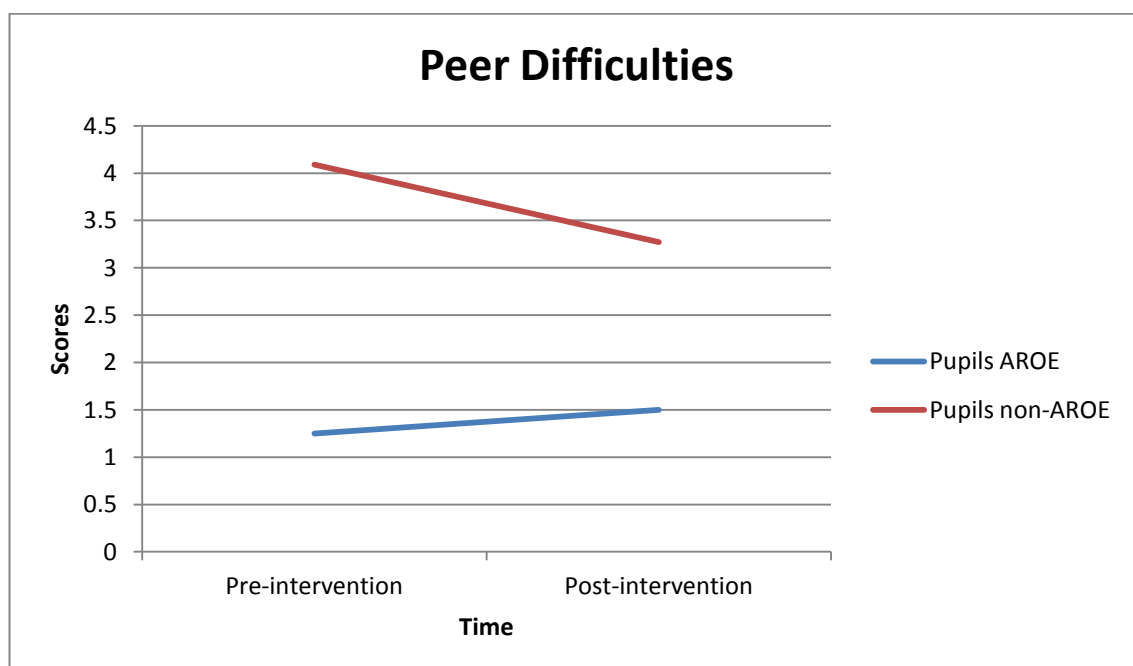
Figure 4-2. Graph presenting how Emotional Symptoms scores fluctuated for the two subgroups before and after the intervention.



Problems with peers, as measured by school staff reports, did not show statistically significant difference, $F(1,17)=.306$, $p>.05$ and the effect of time on the variable was not significant, $F(1,17)=1.081$, $p>.05$. Although the scores of the two subgroups showed a significant difference, $F(1,17)=10.343$, $p<.05$, they had changed in opposite directions (Figure 4-3). In particular, the pupils AROE showed fewer peer problems when comparing scores before ($M=4.091$) and after ($M=3.273$) the intervention, but pupils non AROE showed a marginal increase in their scores ($M_1=1.250$, $M_2=1500$).

Finally, prosocial behaviour comparisons showed that there was no significant difference for the pupils' scores before and after the intervention, $F(1,17)=.306$, $p>.05$ and that the prosocial behaviour measurements in the two different time points for the two subgroups (Time 1 and Time 2) did not differ significantly, $F(1,17)=.313$, $p>.05$.

Figure 4-3. Graph presenting how Peer Difficulties scores fluctuated for the two subgroups before and after the intervention.



4.2.4 Overview of quantitative findings

The statistical analyses have revealed that, despite the small number of participants in the study, the majority of the reliabilities are near or above the acceptable cut off point, allowing for inferential statistics and some conclusions to be drawn. Comparisons of the samples before and after the intervention for all pupils have shown that there was no noteworthy change in any of the variables measured. This could be a result of the relatively small sample or the short duration of the intervention programme. However, when comparing pupils AROE and non-AROE it was evident that the impact of the intervention was greater for the first group. Similarly, pupils AROE seemed to have greater improvement in terms of emotional health and peer interactions than their non-AROE peers. The following section will present the qualitative findings.

4.3 Qualitative findings

4.3.1 Overview of the thematic analysis

The thematic analysis allowed for identification and analysis of the themes in order to provide a rich description of the participants' and facilitators' viewpoints about the strength-based intervention. The analysis aimed to answer the qualitative research questions as accurately and comprehensively as possible, whilst considering further factors that arose from the data, beyond the initial research questions. This is in line with the deductive principles of the thematic analysis, which is fundamentally theoretically driven, whilst allowing for novel findings. To avoid bias at this stage, the research questions will be addressed in detail in the following chapter, where the findings will be linked with existing literature. Despite having collected information from three different sources (school staff, pupils AROE and pupils not AROE), an integrative approach was harnessed and the findings will be presented conjointly in a single narrative format.

After a thorough examination of the interview transcripts, four main themes (Figure 4-6) and fifteen sub-themes emerged from the analysis of the data. A thematic map can be found in Figure 4-5 and provides a synopsis of how the themes and subthemes are interlinked. The full transcripts are also available in appendix 13. The following sections will follow the form of an analytic narrative, which will report on themes using extracts. Extracts will be used to illustrate the interviewees' views as evidence. When reporting to extracts, key symbols will be used to facilitate the meaning. Explanations of the symbols can be found in the key (Figure 4-4).

Figure 4-4. Transcription key

(())	double parentheses indicate transcriber's comments, including comments about non-verbal behaviour and sounds
Bold	indicates marked emphasis
CAPITALS	indicate increased loudness
[]	indicates a word is added by the researcher to enhance meaning
***	A word that has been removed to ensure anonymity
(...)	indicates that some words / phrases were left out

Figure 4-5. Thematic map

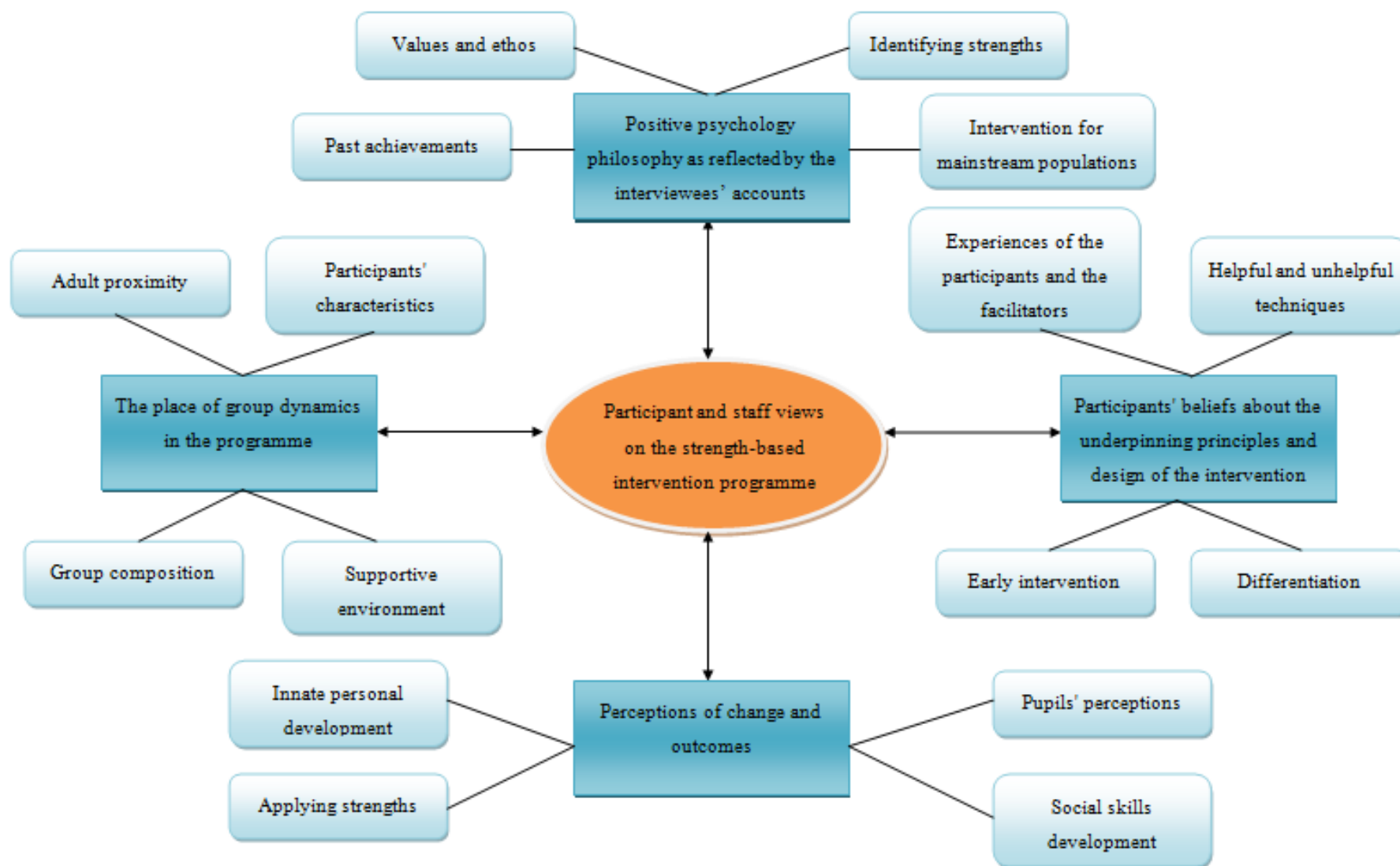
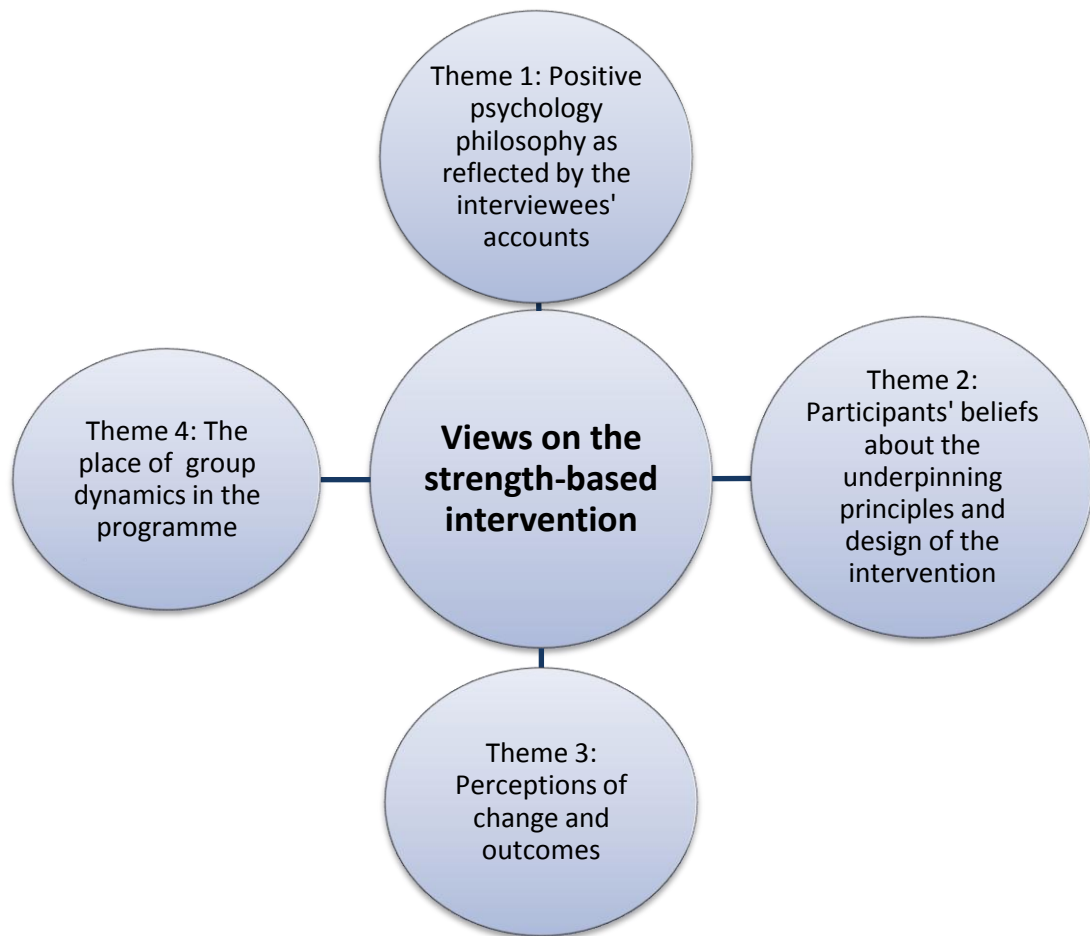


Figure 4-6: The four main themes as they emerged from the thematic analysis



4.3.2 Theme 1: Positive psychology philosophy as reflected by the interviewees' accounts

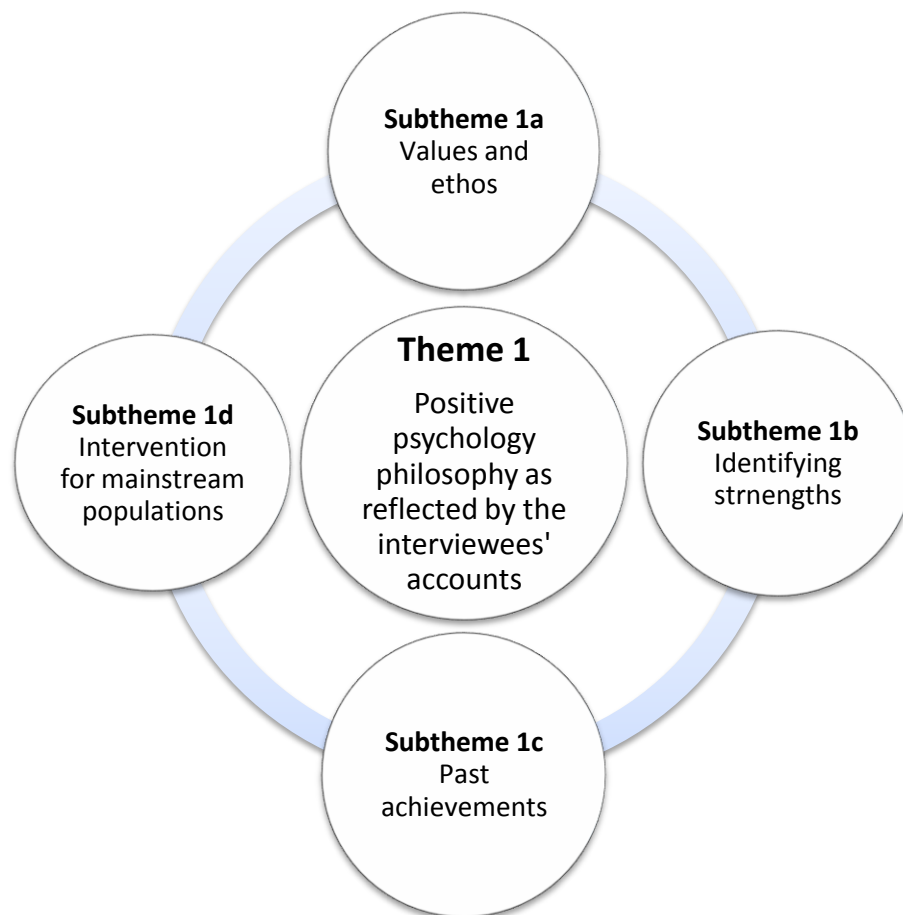
As a result of the research methods employed in the current study, the overarching psychological theory permeated the accounts of the interviewees, when describing their experience of the intervention. The philosophical background of positive psychology encompasses a focus on:

“wellbeing, happiness, flow, personal strengths, wisdom, creativity, imagination and characteristics of positive groups and institutions” (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011; p.2).

Given that the research was embedded within this framework, discourse in this area would be anticipated, as the researcher placed great emphasis on this during the intervention and the interview stages. The perceptions of the interviewees about positive

psychology were considered invaluable and were seen as central in defining the programme's helpfulness. Theme 1 consisted of four sub-themes: values and ethos, identifying strengths, past achievements, and intervention for mainstream populations (Figure 4-7).

Figure 4-7. Theme 1 and subsequent subthemes.



4.3.2.1 Subtheme 1a: Values and ethos

Certain positive values such as free expression and authenticity were mentioned by the interviewees on multiple occasions. Most of them seemed to appreciate an approach that focuses on what they are good at, while allowing them to be genuine. The following samples of quotations depict this perception:

“[I liked the session because] they could be open-minded and you could, like, talk about anything.” (Iggy, Yr7, AROE)

“I liked the fact that the children had the freedom to discuss how they felt in a positive way about themselves, that was probably the primary thing I enjoyed about it and felt that the children took from it.” (Lana, co-facilitator)

In addition, both Stanley and Rumi (co-facilitators) proposed that pupils viewed their participation in the group as something positive and that they could be honest and open about their feelings. Moreover, self-expression was highlighted by Dominic (Y7, AROE) who felt that he could say what he thought during our meetings and “be himself”. It also appeared that the programme promoted getting to know peers from a different point of view which was especially a vital opportunity for pupils AROE to present themselves in more genuine ways. Heather (Y9, non-AROE) described her experience of interacting with peers and seeing ‘*how they react to everyday life and stuff like that and what they have been going through*’. Moreover, Rumi (co-facilitator) reflected on a pupil’s response during an activity:

“[he] wrote, he feels lost at home, now nobody knows that , I never heard that before, so if he comes in and he is quite stressed one day(...) he gets challenged straight away because he is not working and that would end up in challenging behaviour, whereas we may know now (...) we can take a different approach.”

A shift from negative and punitive approaches to values of acceptance and celebrating strengths appeared to be significant and was mentioned by the pupils and school staff alike. Dominic expressed that:

“I never used to feel good about myself here and Ms Lana said: you don’t have to think about it, you just, like, feel good about yourself without thinking about it all over again.”

All the co-facilitators acknowledged that it was important and helpful for pupils to focus on their strengths and juxtaposed this with the human tendency to look for negatives. In particular, Lana spoke about pupils AROE and the fact that ‘*they spend a great deal of time being told what they have done wrong, and I don’t think that allows them to foster any kind of positivity about themselves*’. Similarly, Rumi confirmed that pupils AROE do not get the recognition of what they are good at and proposed this approach as a way of replacing challenging behaviour with positive habits. Lastly, as Stanley suggested:

“I think that some of them had never ever thought that they had anything positive to offer (...) [the pupils] ‘ve realised that they are not always in trouble and sometimes when they are asked to come to a group like this, it’s for their own benefit.”

4.3.2.2 Subtheme 1b: Identifying strengths

Interviewees felt that awareness of the notion of strengths and identification of strengths in themselves and others were fostered in the sessions. Pupils and adults were able to describe the experience of identifying strengths and learning more about what they are.

Dominic acknowledged that through the course of the intervention programme he changed his mind towards seeing positives in people rather than focusing on their less helpful characteristics:

“Because, like, there is different people, innit, and they like have different, like, strengths and you’ve just, like, go with it and not getting angry”.

He also felt that listening to other people’s strengths and getting to know them enhanced his awareness of various strengths in people. Heather expressed a notion of celebrating and understanding strengths in the sessions and she seemed excited to recognise that:

“I really use them every day”

She also clarified that she started thinking about her strength, what it actually means and how she could transfer this skill into other areas. In addition, Mina revealed that she discovered areas of herself that were unknown to her:

“I don’t know it just, like, helped us find stuff that we really didn’t know that we were good at. Like, I didn’t realise that I was that honest until I thought about it properly.”

Jake described a sense of self-discovery which enabled his ownership and enhanced his realisation of strengths:

“like, before, like I didn’t really know, like, know what strengths I had and how I can use them, but, like, looking at the table, and, like, realising what they were,

like, I could see it myself (...) It made me feel that I had more strengths than I realised”

Finally, Rumi noticed some unconscious and spontaneous recognition of strengths for a pupil who was initially highly resistant to change:

“I don’t think he was realising that he was doing it, but he was actually, sort of, without thinking, telling me different characteristics for what he is, but I was saying things I know he wasn’t (...) he was correcting me and (...) sort of picking a few of them out, so I think he was quite good that he got to the stage where he was recognising his strengths. (...) It was quite nice to see him saying what other people are good at and what strengths they have”

4.3.2.3 Subtheme 1c: Past achievements

Exploring and elaborating past accomplishments was shown as a significant area of discussion for the interviewees. Pupils could see how they have used their strengths in the past and how this resulted in improving their lives. One pupil recognised using her strength, open-mindedness, in the past in a social situation which resulted in her widening her social network. In particular, Mina gave an example where she used her strength when meeting a new person and she spoke of the opportunities that came up from using her strength. Another pupil also linked his strength with a previous experience and pride:

“It made me think that, like, the strengths I had done was bravery and it made me think about the past, that, something that I have done in the past that made me proud” (Robin, Yr7, AROE)

4.3.2.4 Subtheme 1d: Interventions for mainstream populations

The idea that only pupils with additional needs receive adult attention and intervention was highlighted from the interviews. In accordance with positive psychology principles all pupils should have opportunities for improvement regardless of their level and difficulties. Joel, who is not AROE and is a very well behaved pupil, confirmed that he never normally participates in activities focusing on internal qualities and positive traits. Furthermore, Stanley recognised that:

“if they are being naughty then they get selected for a group, if they are one of the pupils that doesn’t normally get involved with being naughty, they don’t really get singled out for a group like this, it was quite nice for them to be involved in that (...) the gifted and talented perhaps, you know the higher achievers, yeah (...) they don’t always get singled out for something that is particularly, that they can see it is quite a positive experience. They might get singled out for more literacy, they might get singled out for more numeracy, which they might not necessarily see as a reward.”

4.3.3 Theme 2: Participants’ beliefs about the underpinning principles and design of the intervention

The second theme is concerned with issues related to theoretical background and practical application. The research was embedded in a newly devised intervention programme and was facilitated by a variety of adults which resulted in various opinions and issues being raised. Four sub-themes were generated as part of the analysis for this theme and they include experiences of the participants and the facilitators, helpful and unhelpful techniques, differentiation and early intervention (Figure 4-8).

4.3.3.1 Subtheme 2a: Experiences of the participants and the facilitators

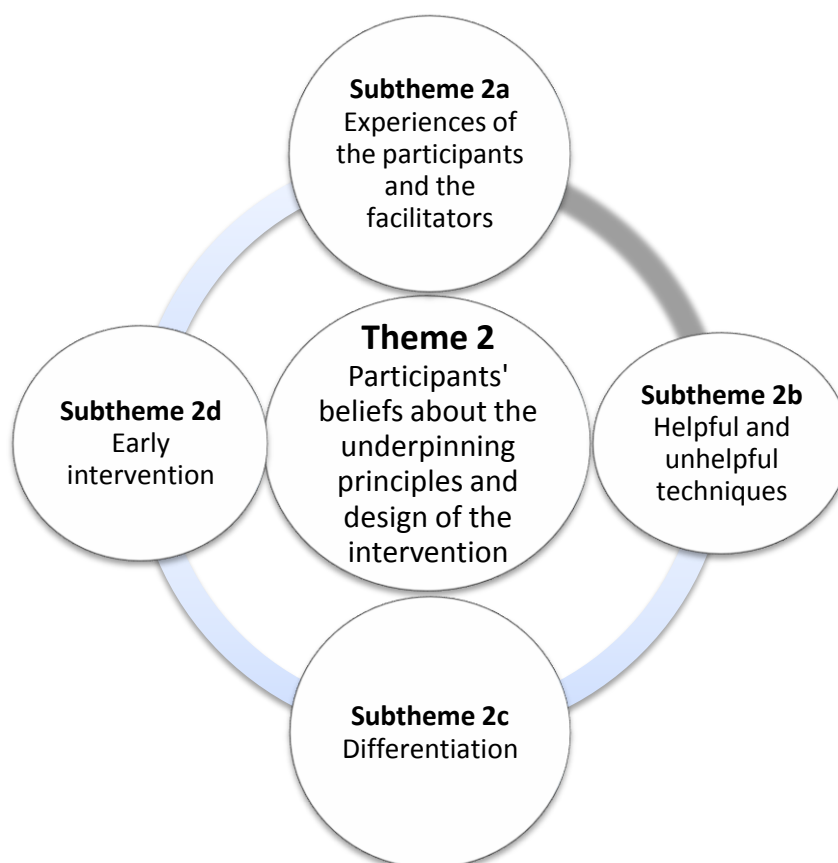
The perceptions of the pupils and the adults involved in the intervention and the subsequent feelings that the process evoked were reflected by the data. Opinions on specific areas and approaches, as well as impressions about the overall experience, were mentioned. It is significant to keep in mind how the programme was received by pupils and staff, and their viewpoints offer valuable information about personal preferences and what is most important for them. The school staff talked of their own experiences of the programme and how they believed the pupils experienced it. A range of views and feelings was put across when describing the sessions which included happiness, enjoyment and pleasant emotions overall. In particular, pupils felt that:

“They were fun (...) like it wasn’t boring, and we got to talk and, it was just fun.” (Mina, Yr7, non-AROE)

“I found them good, easy.(...) I think they were good, so I enjoyed them all (...) everything was helpful, it was really good this strength group” (Robin, Yr7 , AROE)

“Overall it was a good experience, like, during the whole thing (...)You done alright here, so there is no really, like, room for changing stuff as it was good, yeah” (Jake, Yr8 AROE)

Figure 4-8: Theme 2 and subsequent subthemes.



Facilitators believed that a level of calmness permeated the sessions and this was related to focused work for the pupils when carrying out the activities. Overall they enjoyed the sessions and they viewed them as beneficial for themselves.

Shyness and a level of fear were evident especially at the beginning of the programme. Both Heather and Mina spoke about their feelings in the first session. The former recognised that she was shy at the start and Mina reflected on her emotional state, describing herself as:

“nervous because, like, none of my friends were really there and nervous, yeah”

A similar opinion was held by Stanley who felt that he was quite apprehensive in the first two sessions. He admitted to originally having concerns about the overall

functionalities and outcomes of the programme. However these feelings were diminished as the sessions proceeded.

One pupil spoke about shyness as a feeling that he experienced across all sessions due to being in a group of peers. More specifically Iggy suggested that:

“Most people get a bit shy at what they say [in the sessions]. (...) In, like, the group (...) you wouldn’t be able to say it because you are shy”

4.3.3.2 Subtheme 2b: Helpful and unhelpful techniques

This subtheme was formulated based on opinions about particular helpful and less helpful approaches linked to the intervention programme as a whole. The majority of the pupils and adults were able to identify beneficial methods, while acknowledging that some practices were not as effective. In addition some interviewees mentioned that they would like to carry on using certain techniques, whereas for others they gave recommendations for amendments or omissions.

Various interviewees gave positive feedback on specific activities and approaches that were used in the programme. Iggy seemed to like the warm up activities but recognised that if he could choose an activity he would do more of the questionnaires. In relation to that he said:

“I like the questionnaire. (...) on the paper when you had to ask about your like and all that, I like that a lot (...) it pretty much rates me, like, what, who, how I act and how, what I do”.

Heather found that she preferred activities with artistic elements and mentioned that the warm up activities helped with knowing the group participants better. She also liked focusing on past achievements and using visual representations to depict them. Similarly, Lana had a favourable view about the use of warm up activities and believed that facilitates pupils’ preparation for learning. She also valued the element of freedom in the sessions, and recognised that the duration was suitable for the pupils.

Daniel seemed to particularly enjoy the drama activities, while Jake, Joel and Mina highlighted the benefits of drawing a character with their strengths. They highlighted an element of invention, when using their imagination and personal view, while they pointed out that they enjoyed being creative and felt that they could use their

talents to make something concrete. Robin's opinion about what he liked revolved around him being with friends and working with them, which he admitted to have found very interesting. Moreover, Dominic saw the layout and format of the group as beneficial in managing his restlessness and helped him promote good behaviours:

"We do a lot of sitting down, like, yeah, and, like, I sit down in class and just do my work and don't speak, so I don't get in trouble."

The facilitators did not focus on specific activities, and instead they spoke of some of the techniques and strategies of the programme that they would like to use more often. Their orientation was more towards the principles of the overall practice and how to link them with beneficial outcomes for the pupils. In relation to this Stanley said:

"[I would choose to do more activities around] communication, talking about their strengths in a group, listening skills around strengths and some of their weaknesses".

And Rumi expressed that:

"I like the way that they were open, it was more discussion-based than just sort of set work too much. (...) I think the questionnaires were quite interesting (...) I think [the sessions] how they were set out was clear and precise. It wasn't too wordy".

Participants expressed some views in relation to not very helpful techniques, which were employed as part of the intervention. More specifically, some pupils did not particularly enjoy writing or drawing and there was some critique in terms of the table of strengths that was presented to the pupils and was used as a guide in strengths identification. Iggy expressed that:

"[the programme] does tell you what strength [you have] but it's not like your real strength, if you know what I mean."

Heather described one activity as her least favourite and explained that she did not enjoy working in a group without explicit adult guidance, and Daniel found that there were too many questionnaires to be filled in. With regard to the strengths and whether the language was age appropriate for the specific population, Joel found that

some strengths were unknown to him and he needed further clarification to understand the meaning of some words (eg., prudence).

Lana spoke about the repetition of some activities which she believed not to be a good idea. She also presented a negative view about using many art activities and explained that pupils ended up focusing more on the technical parts of the activity and how their characters should look, rather than linking it to their strengths. Stanley's opinion highlighted negative elements in terms of the initial group size. He felt that the group was too big to begin with, and that this was not very helpful for the pupils or the facilitators. He also expressed that the traditional classroom layout was not ideal for the particular purpose and explained that the social element of the group required a different layout from that of a lesson.

The list of strengths and the fact that it was too rigid was commented on by Iggy and Lana, who gave some recommendations on extending the list of strengths and including values and skills related to what the pupils do in their everyday life:

"Like maybe tactics, I think about everything because I play a lot of video games [and this should have been included]. Like how you feel about the situation and I don't know how you call it, like, feelings about yourself, like what you like to feel, you know, what strength. I mean, like, you know when there's, what's it called, there's, you feel back about yourself, that you are bad but then you feel you are good." (Iggy, Yr7, AROE)

"I think that you would have to perhaps think a lot more about focusing on the strengths and how they can use them within school, so maybe incorporating that within activities." (Lana, co-facilitator)

Students and school staff came up with a number of new ideas in terms of improving the material and they also recommended some amendments and omissions. Two students had a clear idea of how they would like the sessions to change:

"Maybe, like, go to a separate room (...) [and talk] about what happened, and if you use your strengths." (Iggy, Yr7, AROE)

"Change it so (...) if you did like, um, if we had one strength, and we picked one strength and we had to use it and say like, 'Um, what strength is the, like the harder to use in everyday life' and, um, what strength is the most, nicest strength or something like that." (Heather, Yr9, non-AROE).

Co-facilitators had varied views on how to improve the sessions which reflected their different priorities and experiences. Lana mentioned that more complex activities could be used for the pupils and these could be facilitated by the researcher, whereas standard teaching-type activities could be delivered by the school staff. For Rumi, relationships between the pupils should have been thought through more before starting the sessions. He believed that overfamiliarity between some of the pupils had an impact on their behaviour in the group and he clarified that he would pick participants more carefully next time. Finally, Stanley focused on pupil empowerment:

“Some role play would be quite good, to help them realise how, how their strength might influence somebody else in a positive or negative manner (...) They could have helped to develop some of the questions around a theme (...) so more pupil participation.”

The limited amount of information prior to the commencement of the programme in relation to the selection criteria of the participants came up in the interviewees' responses. Iggy described a feeling of confusion in terms of their selection and reason for being in the group, while Joel felt that he was not given adequate information from the school about the purpose of the group. Stanley confirmed these views:

“I think some of them, um, they were questioning quite informally as to why they were in this group and what, how they were selected”.

Lots of the interviewees chose to comment on the duration of the sessions and the programme overall, linking these with its outcomes and potential effectiveness. Lana admitted that the six weeks was not enough to promote applications of strengths in the school setting. Similarly, Stanley commented on the duration of the programme, noting that another five weeks would have given different results. He also suggested that the sessions were too short and he recommended a half an hour time extension. His view was reiterated by Daniel (Yr7, AROE) who said that:

“[You could] have extra time, so, like, everyone can have like a choice, like a chance to, like, talk to you (...) it's like, a lot of activities and we will do stuff, so, like, it's better to have, like, longer time.”

4.3.3.3 Subtheme 2c: Differentiation

The notion of differentiation concerns the adaptation of the educational material and the management of the learning in terms of the input, the task, content, resources, grouping, support, response and outcome to ensure equal opportunities for all learners (Bearne, 1996). It is essentially interlinked with inclusion principles and enabling every pupil to have access to the educational process by making reasonable adjustments. In the particular study it is also related to the principles of the intervention design and the fact that pupils AROE may have additional learning needs, therefore requiring some adjustment to their educational provision. Since it is embedded within teaching practice and it lies within the schools' responsibilities it seems logical that the three co-facilitators commented upon this subject.

Specifically, some comments reflected a need for more differentiated activities. Lana believed it would be worthwhile to consider how to employ a variety of activities, which would allow for different learning styles to be encompassed. Stanley expressed the view that the material presented challenges for some of the students and described some of the worksheets as too complicated. He believed that it would be more helpful if the pupils developed the material in their own language to enhance comprehension. Rumi's comments on differentiation were more individualised and linked to one pupils with SEN:

*"So in their tasks they had.. where they could draw a superhero or write a story and it sort of, that sounds more to their interest rather than being just that's what you are doing. (...) Some of the students like, say, for instance ***, he has got Asperger's Syndrome, he really, really struggles and he can't he literally can't, like, see outside the box, but that's a big, big difficulty for him. (...) so using their strengths but like you did, having a list of five different activities, so it's more personalised to the student."*

4.3.3.4 Subtheme 2d: Early intervention

The importance to offer additional support and professional involvement as early as possible has been highlighted as the most effective method to minimise difficulties. However, sometimes early intervention can present challenges in relation to how the pupils can engage with the material. Stanley expressed his views about early

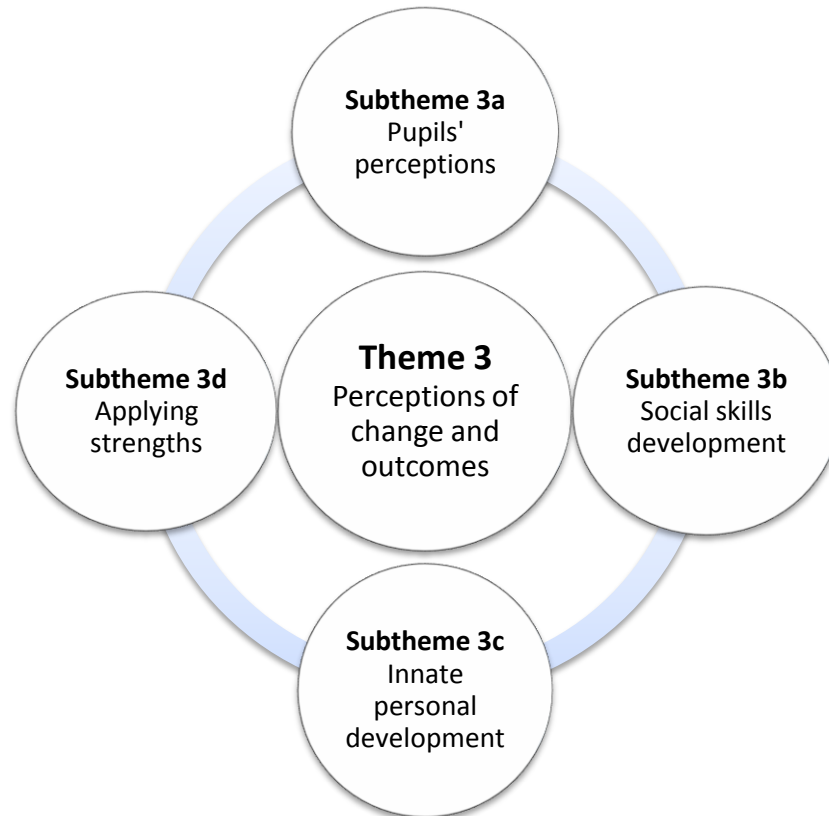
intervention and appeared to have controversial opinions about the selected year group, although seeming to place great emphasis on their age:

“They are quite...year seven, quite a young year group, still quite impressionable and whether they’ve, whether they’ve got the character, the strength in character to actually change themselves yet, I don’t know, but this might be a start, start of the process that they might be able to develop on. (...) I would probably see them again at, we don’t normally start working with the year seven group; I normally get a group like this in year eight or nine. It’s quite nice to work with them now, it’s nice to know some of the characters, some of their, some of their, um, the way they perceive their own strengths was quite nice because the I can work on that at a later date so, yeah. Getting to know them quite earlier on, building relationships with them.”

4.3.4 Theme 3: Perceptions of change and outcomes

It was evident that the impact of the intervention programme was important for the interviewees and their responses resonate their impressions and judgments with regard to results. Effectiveness was a fundamental issue for the current study and not only does it derive from the nature of the study and its exploratory evaluative design, but also it is very much linked to the underlying principles of making a positive impact. Theme three encompasses the opinions of the interviewees about change and comprises four subthemes. These subthemes were generated by the participants’ responses and in particular include pupils’ perceptions, social skills development, innate personal development and application of strengths (Figure 4-9)

Figure 4-9: Theme 3 and subsequent subthemes.



4.3.4.1 Subtheme 3a: Pupils' perceptions

Pupils and co-facilitators alike commented on whether the perceptions of the participants have been influenced by the intervention and in what direction they were affected. Various attitudes and beliefs were elaborated with regard to three key areas, namely perceptions about self, school and others. When explicitly asked, seven interviewees believed there was some change in self-perceptions for the participants, five thought their attitudes towards school changed and nine expressed that the intervention changed participants' views about people around them.

To begin with, most of the interviewees' opinions revealed some change in self-perceptions. Pupils expressed that they were able to identify their strengths and positive traits, which helped them view themselves differently. Also, pupils mentioned that they found themselves to become more communicative and honest after the sessions. Realising that he started thinking more about himself, Robin (Yr7, AROE) felt that his view about himself changed in a good way as a result of the programme and Dominic's perception linked strengths application with a more positive perception about himself:

“I start forgiving people a little bit more. (...) [I feel] better about myself”

Although Rumi acknowledged that there was some improvement in pupils’ confidence levels, there were some additional opposite views which reflected that there was no significant change, and that the specific programme might have been the start of a change, due to the limited time period. In particular, Stanley commented on the short duration of the sessions and the need to develop what the pupils have started learning, to enable them to consolidate and ensure change across domains of life. Similarly, Lana felt that the sessions only “planted a seed” in the pupils’ minds about positives and further sessions were required for change to take place. This view was congruent with Jake (Yr8, AROE) who felt that:

“I mean I know what strengths I have but not really changed my mind.”

Interviewees shared their views on how their perceptions of school changed and a wide variety of responses were revealed from the recorded material. Some pupils claimed that they have realised how strengths are used in lessons and gave examples of how strengths could be applied in circumstances they found something hard. In addition, Robin felt that he had developed a better understanding of teachers and schoolwork, and Dominic’s view revealed improvements in terms of his behaviour and engaging with learning:

“I want to learn more now, and not as being in as much in trouble”

Other responses reflected a different view and some interviewees felt that there was no change in how they viewed and felt about school. Both Joel and Jake expressed that their opinions about school had stayed the same, and Lana mentioned that the programme was not adequately related to school to allow for a change in their perception.

It was also evident from the interviews that there were various opinions about how the programme affected the participants’ views of people around them. Interviewees spoke about pupils becoming more able to see the potential of strengths in different people and that a sense of understanding and empathy was enhanced for those who might have faced challenges in their lives. One co-facilitator suggested that pupils were given the opportunity to see that other people identified positives about them and that this experience helped them change their view on others. Also, two pupils mentioned the notion of looking the inner qualities of the individuals:

“I want to be more honest [to other people]. You can’t rate [someone] by the looks, you have to rate him by how he actually acts” (Iggy, Yr7, AROE)

“It’s made me think, like, I’ve got to think a bit more about people than judging them straight away” (Mina, Yr7, non-AROE)

In terms of each particular group, Stanley felt that pupils changed their mind about the participants, having seen that they share some of their strengths with others. In addition, Rumi observed that, despite an initial unhelpful environment, most pupils ended up pointing out each others’ strengths by the last session.

4.3.4.2 Subtheme 3b: Social skills development

Throughout the interviews, participants made reference to their interpersonal skills, which seemed to have improved, according to pupils and school staff. They gave examples of better intentions and interactions with others while specifically, new strategies seemed to emerge with regard to resolving conflict and pupils presented as more eager to interact with peers outside of their immediate social network. This notion is supported by a number of participants who suggested that they had become more considerate, and developed their capacity to forgive others. Pupils also felt that they had expanded their social interactions and have become more open to speaking with peers. Co-facilitators commented on the impact of the group on pupils’ social skills. Specifically, it was believed that working with peers from different year groups promoted their openness to new individuals, and at the same time, the fact that pupils could see themselves using social skills within a group was very helpful. Pupils confirmed these views by giving examples of social situations:

“If they are being mean to me, or something I wouldn’t really like, ignore it, like I would tell them, like my point of view saying what I do not like, and I would ask them what they don’t like about me and then we just, like, solve it and then, like, understand each other” (Daniel, Yr7, AROE)

“[The sessions] made me realise that it’s okay to talk to, like, new people and it is not, like, weird (...) I think I talk a bit more but, like, in the right ways, Like I talk to people who I don’t normally talk to a bit more. (...) Normally when I, like, if I, like, start a fight with someone, I wouldn’t try to make an effort to make

things better, I will just leave it because I can't be bothered but (...) I realise that I have got to think a bit more and try a bit harder to be open-minded"
(Mina, Yr7, non-AROE)

4.3.4.3 Subtheme 3c: Innate personal development

Cultivation of personal qualities was discussed from pupils and co-facilitators and there was an acknowledgement that certain aspects of their inner self had developed as a result of the intervention. Improvements in self-reflection, self-awareness and self-worth were revealed from in the interviews, while a sense of enhancing self-esteem was also evident. In addition, behaviour and learning attitude improvements were discussed and were linked to the outcomes of the programme. Daniel's response illustrates this:

"[The sessions] help me to control, like, my grades and everything"

Interviewees mentioned that identifying their strengths led to greater self-regard and discovering positives they did not know they had was a pleasant surprise. The concept of reflection and the fact that pupils were able to self-discover their strengths was described as beneficial by adults and participants alike. They promoted thinking and empowered the individuals, who took more ownership of their positive views. Some pupils felt that they became more in control of their school life, including their academic performance, whereas others felt that being proud of past achievements has helped them improve their behaviour.

Co-facilitators emphasised improvements in self-worth and acknowledged that pupils viewing themselves differently has helped them increase their confidence levels. Rumi's response reflected this perception:

"I can see that finding students' strengths and letting them know what they are good at and giving them that self-esteem could be a big positive and a learning of the students (...) [one pupil] near the end of today's session especially, um, he actually started engaging more in conversation with me about different sort of characteristics of himself. (...) Having a belief in themselves and being able to talk about what they are good at, I think that can only be a positive"

4.3.4.4 Subtheme 3d: Applying strengths

Using strengths and transferring them in various settings was reported by the interviewees, who recognised that their personal strengths, or the overall concept of strengths within individuals, could be used in beneficial ways. Pupils suggested that learning about strengths is fundamental to applying them in the wider environment and some seemed keen on using their strengths more and becoming even better at using them. One pupil reported an example of how the programme influenced his use of strengths and resulted in positive outcomes.

“[I use my strengths] so I don’t end up getting in trouble. (...) I do a bit more teamwork because I am doing PE on Wednesdays so I ‘m going to have to do more teamwork and leadership. I know what they [my strengths] are and I can use them” (Dominic, Yr7, AROE)

In addition, it was revealed from the interview material that some advancement took place in terms of considering and generalising strengths across different domains of life. Lana believed that focusing on what is good about themselves could help pupils generalising their skills in the wider school environment. Heather described how a specific activity stimulated her thinking of how to utilise her strengths in everyday life and gave examples of potential exam scenarios where she could benefit from using her strength. Moreover, Dominic and Daniel felt that they could see individual strengths anywhere and that mostly everyone had positive resources in them. On the other hand, Stanley seemed sceptical about this and suggested that extending strengths outside the group would require additional time and intervention. However, two pupils mentioned potential school and home applications:

“It was like proper thinking that I could use like at home and stuff”.
(Mina, Yr7, non-AROE)

“I can use the strengths to benefit me in my learning and stuff like that”.
(Jake, Yr8, AROE)

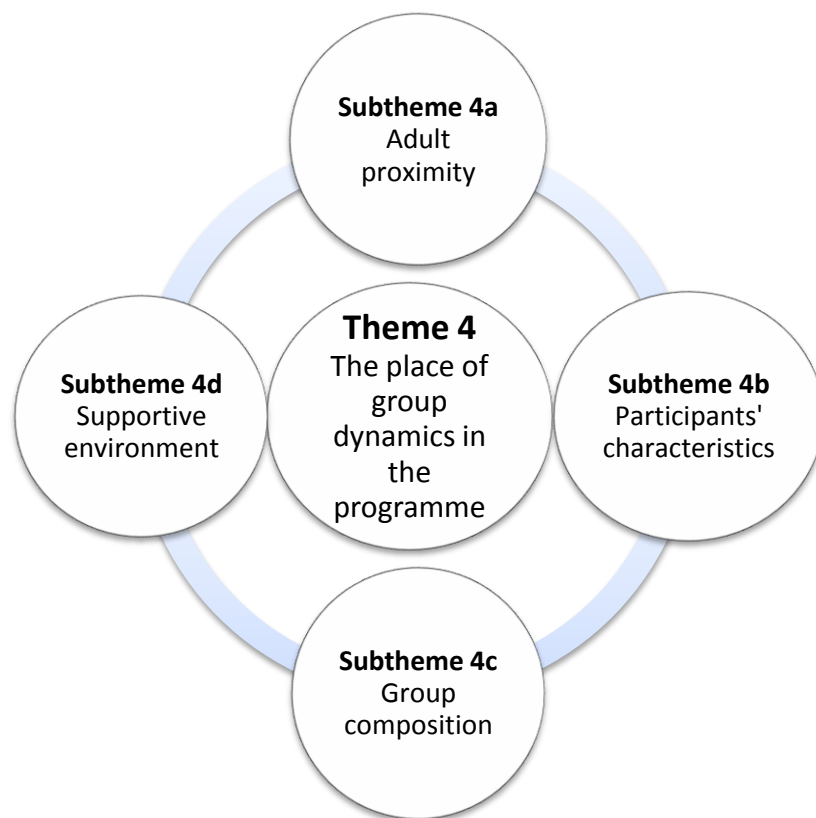
In addition, one member of staff commented on the importance of consistency in strengths application and that it would be helpful to generalise the principles to adopt a whole school approach:

“I think it would be important to get what has been learnt to the teachers; I think that could be quite a good thing somehow, if you could do that” (Rumi, co-facilitator)

4.3.5 Theme 4: The place of group dynamics in the programme

The concept of group dynamics derives from social psychology and the recognition that a system as a whole has greater magnitude in comparison to its aspects altogether (Kottler & Englar–Carlson, 2014). The interactive patterns and the forces that occur between the participants of a group influence the individuals and the group alike, revealing that the sum constitutes more than the individual parts (Toseland & Rivas, 2012). Interviewees reported various experiences and opinions in relation to their group and the data generated four subthemes. Adult proximity, participants’ characteristics, group composition and supportive environment (Figure 4-10).

Figure 4-10: Theme 4 and subsequent subthemes.



4.3.5.1 Subtheme 4a: Adult proximity

Pupils commented on the role of the adults in the intervention and some seemed keen on having the space and time to interact individually with the facilitators. One pupil would have welcomed the opportunity to experience more individual adult interaction and felt that the sessions were too short to interact meaningfully with the facilitators on an individual basis. In addition, it became evident that pupils needed some discussions to remain confidential:

“[Next time] maybe, like, go to a separate room and, like, every two lessons, year, two lessons and talk about how it changed, and like changed in the past few weeks just like what you think about, like, your strengths and all that (...) if you just want to talk like, say, out, because you feel bad (...) The other students wouldn’t be knowing what you are saying, but if you say it, like, in like the group, they will be ((pause)) when you say, like the, you wouldn’t be able to say it because you are shy”. (Iggy, Yr7, AROE)

One adult also mentioned that knowing the pupils well, makes it easier for him to work with them and he suggested that the relationships that were already built in this group could be beneficial in the future, in terms of engaging them with similar processes. Finally, another adult emphasised the importance of working on a one-to-one basis and proposed future applications with particular pupils from the group who could benefit from further adult input in a structured and safe environment.

4.3.5.2 Subtheme 4b: Participants’ characteristics

Individual differences and how they affected the behaviours and perceptions of the participants were commented upon by pupils and staff. This was predominantly highlighted in terms of pupils AROE as opposed to those that were non-AROE. Stanley admitted that working with this group presented some difficulties, since it juxtaposed behaviourally challenging pupils with more placid and timid individuals. He found that integration of all pupils in the group was a hard task for him, but he acknowledged that it was helpful for everyone involved. However, Jake seemed to struggle with sustaining his attention, due to a distracting pupil in the group. He recognised that he failed to

complete some of the activities because he was constantly interrupted. Jake explicitly requested adults to remove a pupil from the group in order to improve his concentration. Rumi, on the other hand, had a particular view about mixing different subgroups together and mentioned that:

*“[It was] definitely beneficial [to mix mainstream pupils with those at risk] I think more for the students that are at risk it is more beneficial for them because they get to see appropriate behaviour as such. (...) we had the students that were not at risk of exclusion, they were a lot more calm and a lot more engaged in the work and I think sometimes, in stage, I did see it a few times where, for instance, *** was next to ***, he was, like he went back to his work and it’s good to have somebody who is a bit better concentrated next to them, definitely.”*

4.3.5.3 Subtheme 4c: Group composition

The creation of the new group and the way it evolved were discussed by the interviewees; they mentioned that relationships developed between the group members, which affected the group’s main features and elements. One pupil found that the small size of the group helped her feel more open, and promoted a sense of bonding. She explained that this was pivotal in getting to know others and strengthened their relationships. Rumi explored the benefits and shortcomings of including pupils who did not know each other well and were in different year groups. He generally supported the idea of the small group, but felt that expanding the number of participants could potentially eradicate some behaviours displayed by the pupils AROE. Stanley’s view on the group’s coherence projected how relationships evolved throughout the weeks:

“Initially the sessions were quite difficult because there was a peer group that, er, hadn’t had, um, an opportunity to work together, but as ((pause)) over the weeks their relationships started to develop and then the group tended to pull together, erm, and that meant that towards the end the quality of the work that you were asking them to complete actually, er, was better, so it felt better for me then. (...) initially there was a lot of apprehension about joining this group but once they, um, once they know what it was about the attendance was very good (...) they started to ‘jell’ as a group (...) I liked seeing the bonding effect (...)”

there was really a sort of a social group appearing from the work that they have been doing”

4.3.5.4 Subtheme 4d: Supportive environment

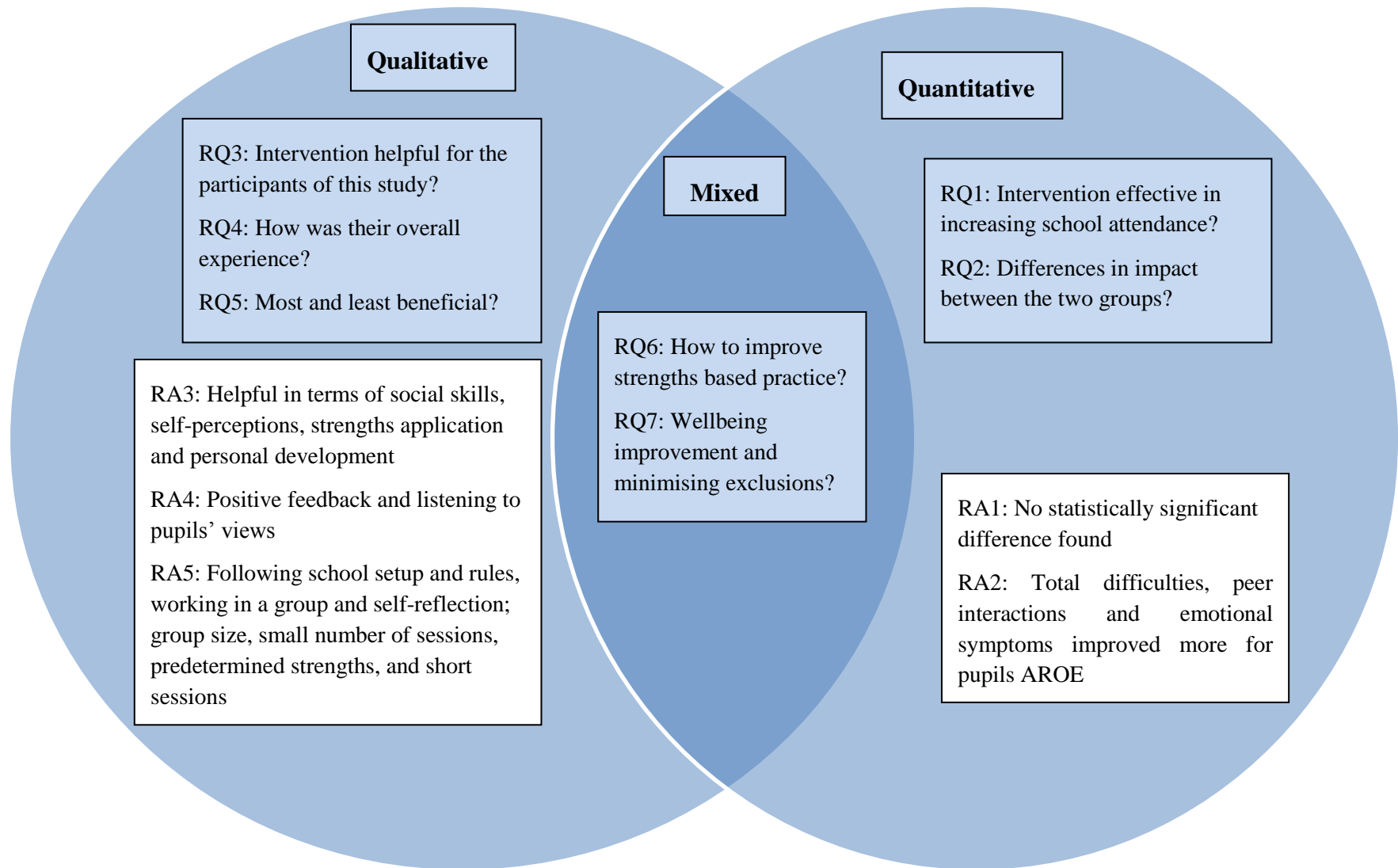
Within the group, the participants were able to experience a sense of sharing and receiving help from adults and peers. They seemed to value a supportive environment which gave them a feeling of safety. This became obvious from the interviewees’ responses which acknowledged the facilitators’ attitude towards the pupils as a highly significant element. One pupil explained that helpfulness was fostered in the group overall, and pupils would help each other with the activities, while having the opportunity to be helped by adults. Another pupil recognised that the environment allowed self expression and sharing of feelings, whilst he found that he could talk about his life to other people in the group. A similar view was reflected in Rumi’s response, who felt that peer interaction and collaboration can function as an alternative route to traditional adult guidance:

“I think it was really good when they were working if one student was struggling, like, to answer one area, to get them to sort of help themselves with their peers, so at some stages I saw you doing it as well and I had done it a few times (...) if they can’t identify themselves, by getting them to do that with their friends, in that group, it can sort of open their mind and they sort of relate that better from an adult so I think it’s really important to keep the group discussion going constantly as well.”

4.4 Preliminary findings summary

The findings of the two individual data analyses present some initial response to the research query. Figure 4-11 presents how the research questions (RQ) were addressed by each method and the outcomes of the analyses up to this stage. A brief initial attempt to link the findings with the questions is presented through the research answers (RA). The questions that fall within both the quantitative and qualitative phases will only be answered in the following stage, as indicated by the study’s convergent parallel mixed methods design (Creswell, 2014a).

Figure 4-11: Initial amalgamation of research questions with the preliminary findings.



The figure above depicts how the research questions were addressed by each method and they are answered based on the findings. The statistically significant difference between improvements of the two subgroups in terms of overall difficulties presents as the most important finding of the quantitative analysis. Moreover, the themes and subthemes that emerged from the qualitative analysis offer a considerable amount of information in terms of how the intervention and positive psychology were received and perceived. This high volume of findings was the initial purpose of this study, given that the qualitative approach was the principal method (Fox, Martin & Green, 2007). Interviewees focused on the ethos of the programme and commented on the structure and the design, while having varied views about the effectiveness and the impact. These findings were in line with the deductive nature of the study and are congruent with what was expected to come up from the interviews. Nevertheless, a further emphasis on interactions and supportive environment was evident, which appears to be a novel finding. No further conclusions were drawn for the two methods together, as the interpretation and merging of the data will take place in the following chapter (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

4.5 Chapter summary

This chapter provided an overview of the findings based on data that were obtained using quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. The statistical and thematic analyses have been used to generate findings that can be used as evidence to inform a discussion and link the current research with practical applications. Two statistical analyses were employed for the quantitative phase and the thematic analysis resulted in four themes and four subthemes for each theme. The findings so far have been presented in segregated forms. In the following chapter, the two sets of findings will be merged to allow for interpretations, conclusions and implications for professional practice to be considered.

5 Discussion

5.1 Introduction to chapter

The final chapter aims to pull together the findings of the two data sets, and further connect them to the existing literature. The research questions will be answered, and the current findings will be compared and contrasted with previous research findings. A systemic perspective will be adopted to interpret the findings and this will be followed by an exploration of the researcher's position in relation to the study. Finally, implications for practice, critique of the techniques employed in the current study and recommendations for future research will be discussed.

5.2 Research purpose and questions revisited

The current study aims to fulfil an evaluative and exploratory purpose, whereby reported outcomes of the intervention are the main sources of evidence. Alongside eliciting feedback from those involved, the core aim of the study is to illustrate potential effectiveness and progress findings.

Research questions aiming to reveal differences in attendance outcomes and differences between pupils AROE and those not AROE will be answered in the following section, using findings from quantitative analysis. Qualitative findings will be harnessed to answer questions related to the overall experience, the perceived helpfulness of the intervention, and the participants' accounts on techniques used in the programme. Finally, the two data sets will be merged to reveal changes in wellbeing, school engagement and school exclusions and how strength-based practice can further improve.

5.3 Answering the research questions

5.3.1 RQ1: Is a strength-based intervention effective in increasing school attendance?

The first research question was linked to an initial hypothesis that strength-based interventions can positively affect pupils' attendance. This was mainly based on Harter's study (1998), where he informed pupils about their strengths at the beginning of the semester through individualised feedback from teachers. This seemed to have encouraged pupils to attend lessons more frequently within a 17-weeks timeframe. The

current study did not replicate this finding, and no difference was noted in terms of pupils' attendance. This implies that a 5-sessions strength-based intervention programme was not sufficient to affect school attendance. Moreover, analysis of the two subgroups suggests that pupils AROE and non-AROE had the same attitudes towards coming to school before and after the intervention. There are substantial differences in the methods employed by the two studies, including duration of the sessions and mode of feedback of strengths, which could be the underlying reasons why the findings vary to such an extent.

Attendance is expected to be linked to overall school behaviour (DfES, 2003) and therefore, improvements for the AROE population would potentially imply a drop in exclusions. Likewise, reduction in school exclusions was noted as a result of an intervention aiming to enhance school attendance (Hallam, Castle, Rogers, Creech, Rhamie & Kokotsaki, 2005); this reinforces the notion that attendance is a significant indicator for inclusion and pupil participation.

Government documents have highlighted attendance as a prerequisite for educational achievement and present school absenteeism as a risk factor precipitating vulnerability to slower progress at school (DfE, 2014b). As such, attendance is inextricably linked to academic performance and attainment. Through a different lens, the philosophical and practical underpinnings of positive psychology place attendance at the forefront of behaviour improvements (Lopez & Louis, 2009), proposing that strength-based programmes should make measurements of this variable when estimating impact. The current study's small number of sessions and limited participant sample could have been the underlying reasons for the present findings, and it would be interesting to investigate the outcomes under different conditions. More specifically, the attendance rates could have shown some improvement, had there been further intervention (e.g., 8 weeks) or a larger sample size (e.g., >30) as was initially proposed.

5.3.2 RQ2: Are there differences in impact between the two groups of pupils AROE and non AROE?

Vulnerable populations in schools tend to receive more attention and support from adults. The majority of schools' resources tend to be allocated to enhance the development of those who have a higher level of need and the focus is to help them overcome their difficulties. In line with positive psychology principles, all individuals

should receive support to improve their performance and wellbeing, therefore fulfilling their whole potential (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich & Linkins, 2009). Moving away from problem saturated viewpoints and developing the things that are working well is considered the underpinning of educational theory and practice. As such, the researcher was urged to discern whether there would be any distinguishable features that would be affected by a positive psychology programme. Previous researchers focusing on behaviourally challenging pupils observed that input related to their strengths (whether at an intervention or at a counselling framework level) resulted in both behaviour improvements and a dramatic decrease in exclusions (Turner, 2004; Day-Vinez & Terriquez, 2008).

However, the findings of the present study revealed a level of ambiguity when comparing the two subgroups. To begin with, no significant change, in terms of the variables examined, was noted for the sample after the completion of the intervention. Furthermore, the majority of the comparisons of the two groups showed that there were no differences between pupils AROE and non AROE. Nevertheless, the improvements in overall difficulties of the pupils AROE seemed to be more noteworthy than the improvements for pupils non AROE, as observed by school staff. One possible explanation for this is that pupils AROE tend to display considerably more difficulties and therefore have a greater margin for improvement. Another possible explanation is that pupils AROE have not previously received input in terms of what is positive within them and this may be the key feature that instigates change. Despite the vast amount of preventative and remedial initiatives to tackle exclusions (Bangley & Pritchard, 1998; Hardman, 2001; Law & Sivyier, 2003; Macrae, Maguire, & Melbourne, 2003; Timmins, Shepheds & Kelly, 2003; Vulliamy & Webb, 2003; Hallam & Castle, 2001; Jones & Smith, 2004; Hallam et al., 2005; Burton, 2006; Humphrey & Brooks, 2006; Hallam & Rogers, 2008; Osher, Bear, Sprague & Doyle, 2010; Swinson, 2010; Office for Public Management, 2012; Gilmore, 2013; Huebner, Hills & Jiuang, 2013; Howell, Keyes & Passmore, 2013), none of them was identified as using strength-based or positive psychology approaches. Rather, most of them harnessed behaviour management models and rewards to achieve conformity.

Some studies used psychological models like cognitive-behavioural therapy (Humphrey & Brooks, 2006) and personal-construct psychology (Hardman, 2001). Keeping in mind the psychological theories that can affect behaviour and school exclusions, i.e., Bronfenbrenner's Eco-systemic model (1973), Goleman's Emotional

Intelligence theory (1997), Self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and Maslow's theory of needs (1970) it seems reasonable that a positive approach, which aims to enhance overall wellbeing, has had a greater impact on vulnerable pupils, who may face difficulties in multiple layers and systems. Furthermore, this difference between the two groups could be explained through Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1971), on the basis that working in a group with positive role models could be the cause for their reinforced adaptive functioning.

When looking at specific difficulties, emotional symptoms and peer problems seemed to have improved more for pupils AROE than for those non AROE. However, observed conduct problems observed by staff seem to have occurred more for pupils AROE than for their non AROE peers overtime. Although this so-called deterioration effect (Bergin, 1966) could be a result of chance, it is still interesting to explore. One interpretation of this could be *reactivity* (Heppner, Wampold & Kivlighan, 2008). Pupils knew they were participating in a research project and that school staff would fill in questionnaires about them. This could result in them reacting in different ways as a result of their awareness of being observed. Their understanding and interpretations of the project could affect their behaviours, as implied by the Hawthorne Effect (Earl-Slater, 2002). This can result in participants altering their performance based on their own hypotheses about the experimental treatment, which could threaten the construct validity of the study (Bellini & Rumrill, 2009). Further investigation in this area is essential to explore these staff perceptions and clarify whether this will be maintained for the long term. Lastly, it is worth reiterating that the changes for the population before and after the intervention were not statistically significant.

5.3.3 RQ3: How helpful has the strength-based intervention been for the young people in this study?

Helpfulness and overall improvements from the intervention have been explored using interviews and thematic analysis, developed within a positive psychology framework. Interpretation of the data suggests that strengths education can have implications in various areas of wellbeing. For example, social skills, personal development, perceptions of self and others, and capacity to use strengths were the four areas that interviewees felt were enhanced.

To begin with, the intervention seemed to have made a difference in terms of interpersonal skills. Social competencies and personal development seemed to improve, and these, according to Munn, Lloyd and Cullen (2000), can function as significant contributors to enhancing positive behaviour overall. The interviewees felt that improvements were noted in self-expression, acceptance of others, developing a mutual understanding with others and openness to new people. Day-Vinez and Terriquez (2008) suggested that these types of skills can be linked to reduction in school exclusions.

In addition, empathy seemed to have developed for the pupils, alongside self-reflection and improved self-awareness. These outcomes are in line with Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE), which was introduced in the Education Act (DfES, 2002) and aims towards promoting and fostering overall wellbeing. In other words, it teaches children how to live well. The development of good social relationships between people is a highly valued PSHE target and individuals are expected to be able to identify their emotions as well as factors that affect their emotional health and wellbeing. This study's findings are in line with schools' statutory obligation to promote emotional and social wellbeing (The Education Act, 2005).

Self-esteem and confidence improvements were prominent in pupils and staff accounts. Valuing the individual is a cornerstone of strength-based practice (Craig, 2007; Hooper, 2012), and for this reason opportunities for pupils to like and accept themselves were offered. In addition, positive relationships are related to higher confidence levels and, therefore, the welcoming environment of the interventions could underpin this change in pupils. Prior research in this area revealed that there are strong links between self-esteem, social engagement and positive behaviour (Linley & Proctor, 2013). This area is particularly significant for pupils AROE who probably have a record of negative behaviours and need adults to focus on what they are capable of, rather than their shortcomings. Rashid et al. (2013) came up with effective strategies for integrative and holistic strength-based assessment and intervention; in essence they proposed that focusing on both strengths and areas of weakness can promote a more comprehensive understanding of the child's profile and can bring better outcomes.

The shifts in perceptions of self, school and others were other beneficial outcomes from the intervention. These were considered essential in terms of personal development, as well as making the pupils feel more comfortable in the educational setting and their social environment. There seems to be some association between

improvements in self-awareness and behaviour outcomes, which is congruent with Burton's findings (2006). In addition, Ncube (2006) suggests that strength-based interventions can improve self-esteem, which the current research confirms.

The intervention seemed to enable pupils to become less judgmental and acknowledge that other individuals have strengths and positives in them. Pupils felt they improved in terms of school engagement. Nevertheless, this is a paradox when considering the quantitative finding that no improvements in school engagement had taken place. This could be explained on the basis that this programme was '*the start of change*' as members of staff highlighted and that perhaps this was an initial step for changing pupils' attitudes towards school. This also means that further input is required to enable substantial emotional and behaviour shift.

The strength-based intervention seemed to be particularly helpful in terms of applying strengths. This area is viewed as invaluable in the positive psychology realm, where it is believed that using one's strengths can promote a fulfilling life and authentic happiness (Seligman, 2002). In fact, generalising strengths and using them across different domains of life seems to be key in the journey towards eudaimonia and self-actualisation.

5.3.4 RQ4: How was the overall experience?

Interpretation of the data suggests that participants experienced a wide range of feelings, which varied substantially as the programme went along. The overall emotions evoked seemed to have been positive and in line with positive psychology notions of experiencing happiness at a group level (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011). Participants and staff felt that the sessions were beneficial overall, adding value to the positive experience of the programme. Furthermore, the same findings can be viewed through literature that suggests that the positive mindset instilled by strength-based interventions is associated with academic success (Zyromski, Bryant, Deese and Gerler, 2008). Despite a layer of calmness being prominent in the sessions, a level of nervousness and some anxiety were noted at the beginning of the programme. As per their accounts, the intervention seemed to be intimidating for participants and facilitators alike, and this may be further related to delays in engaging with the material and enabling positive change to happen. For the individuals involved, high levels of novelty and unfamiliarity were noted in terms of the session layout, the group composition and the targets of the

programme. Rubin and Asendorpf (1993) suggest that shyness is evoked in novel situations, when a fear of evaluation is present. Given that questionnaires were initially administered to the participants in the beginning of the first session and request to access their records took place during the consent phase, it is deemed reasonable that some timidity and insecurity would be felt.

The programme was portrayed as an opportunity to be authentic and allow for individuals to express themselves. The notion of genuineness is central to positive psychology theory and existential psychology, where being an authentic individual is associated with authentic happiness (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011). In addition, Authenticity (or Genuineness) is one of the 24 strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) used in the intervention. It essentially incorporates the notion of speaking and presenting one's self in a genuine way, without pretence (Peterson & Park, 2004). This virtue seemed to have been acknowledged and valued in the current study. Pupils were free to express themselves and interact with peers in an 'easy' and honest way.

The components of genuineness are intertwined with the finding that pupils felt their views to be taken into consideration. Being heard and respected seemed to have been highly empowering and motivating. Improvements in social inclusion (Mannion, 2007), respect and self-esteem (Kränzl-Nagl & Zartler, 2010) seem to be some of the most noteworthy benefits of listening to children. Historically, vulnerable populations have not always been adequately listened to by professionals (Noble, 2003), despite legislation highlighting the importance of eliciting their wishes, feelings and choices (DfES, 2001). The most recent SEN Code of Practice (DfE, 2014c) places great emphasis on facilitating the views of children and young people. This is considered a priority for professionals and is associated with multiple benefits. Firstly, it is an empowering approach for children and young people, which helps them develop decision making and independence skills. Furthermore, feedback from pupils is valuable in terms of improving practice. This innovative perspective is also related to helping pupils learn how to express their views. Participation is an ongoing process that requires certain skills on behalf of the pupils. Children and young people need opportunities to develop these skills and practice in appropriate environments. It is further acknowledged that pupils need to be consulted when designing professionals' involvement, whether at an assessment or intervention level. The notion of co-production is central to the new legislation and suggests that children and young people should be at the heart of adults' practice. Lastly, listening to pupils is a method to

ascertain they have access to the material of programmes and that it is appropriately adapted to match their developmental level.

The ethical implications of involving and listening to participants are also pertinent to this area. It could be perhaps considered against humanistic values to evaluate a programme without taking into consideration the participants' perspective, and more so, without giving them the freedom of speech and expression required to make such judgments (Grayling, 2005).

5.3.5 RQ5: What was most and least helpful?

There were a number of perceived helpful and unhelpful approaches in the study, and they were identified by the interviewees as factors impacting on the effectiveness of the intervention.

In the first instance it is important to explore what elements were viewed as beneficial to pupils and staff. Based on their accounts, pupils were rarely given the opportunity to acknowledge, celebrate and develop their positive personality aspects in school. There seemed to be inadequate space and time available for pupils to '*feel good*' (Dominic, pupil AROE) about themselves and, in fact, most behaviour management approaches had a punitive orientation, according to staff. George Bear (2010) asserts that self-discipline techniques using informational manners and prevention of misbehaviour bring incomparably better outcomes. He adds that punishment cannot be used as the sole means of behaviour management and that educators need to focus on the desired positive outcomes when dealing with challenging behaviour. In addition, merely taking steps to correct misbehaviour and work with behaviours that schools are trying to avoid, are viewed as insufficient.

Pupils felt welcome and valued in the programme, elements that are perceived as positive contributors to pupils' behaviour (Munn, Lloyd & Cullen, 2000). This welcoming environment is associated with positive psychology ethos and the endeavour to redefine the aims of education. Moving away from the currently dominant attainment model and the excess focus on targets related to raising achievement as the main success indicators, Morris (2013) stresses that wellbeing should be the uppermost purpose of education.

It became clear from the interviews that pupils valued responsiveness and helpfulness. Collaboration was fostered in adult-student and student-student interactions, which reflects on Vygotsky's model of the Zone of Proximal Development (1978). This theory emphasises cooperation and assisted learning as the key to moving forward. Furthermore, this type of supportive approach by adults is suggested to be promote motivation and commitment in school (Vincent, Harris, Thomson & Toalster, 2007).

The classroom setup and the rules that were introduced at the beginning of the programme were noted by the interviewees as helpful techniques. Building positive habits and demonstrating appropriate behaviour in lessons seemed to be beneficial for pupils and especially those AROE. The positive influence of this experience can be viewed through Bandura's Social Learning Theory and the central tenet that learning takes place as a result of 'observation of response patterns exemplified by various socialisation agents' (Bandura, 1969; p.213). Direct experience and exposure to extraneous conditions are the methods of learning, according to the Social Learning Theory framework (Bandura, 1971) and pupils can replace their old behaviour habits with new, more adaptive ones. This argument favours of the particular group composition method that was used in this study and highlights the importance of mixing pupils with various skills and abilities together.

Self-reflection seemed to be another advantageous approach that gave the opportunity to pupils to think deliberately about themselves. It seemed that pupils were not given the space and time to process and express themselves adequately at school. Communicating perceptions about them and developing self-reflection skills can have positive influence in self-esteem and independence (Valkanova, 2004), while enhancing understanding of social interactions (Williams, 2006). Finally, staff accounts reflected that differentiation and adapting the materials to make sense to the individual were particularly useful. Discovering what works for them and harnessing strategies that relate to their own personal experiences is considered more important than the content of the material (Beaver, 2011).

With regard to what seemed to be unhelpful, pupils and staff articulated their views about specific activities, the sessions and the material. The most prominent negative comment about the programme was the limited number and short duration of the sessions. The intervention, as it was carried out in the current study, was received as the potential start of change, rather than the one factor that will help pupils develop. The

contractual provisions about the timing of the sessions (Orlinsky, Ronnestad & Willutzki, 2004) were formulated based on the schools' resource capacities, the timeframes of the academic year (half-terms and school holidays) and upon the necessity to provide the same programme across the three schools. The data suggests that the sessions were too short for the pupils to comprehend and process the material fully and, in addition, there was little margin for flexibility. In relation to this, Orlinsky, Ronnestad and Willutzki also conducted meta-analyses of studies that looked into timing for interventions (i.e., session duration, frequency and time-limited versus unlimited treatments). They found that the duration and frequency variables alone caused mixed outcomes and it was their interactions with other factors that contributed to the success of a programme. The overall length of the programme seemed to be a pivotal component when focusing on effectiveness.

Comments on the material clarified and highlighted non-beneficial techniques. The use of pre-existing material from positive psychology literature gave a level of helpful structure to the programme. However, it did not allow for new ideas to be incorporated. Interviewees felt that the 24 strengths proposed by Peterson and Seligman (2004) was not a comprehensive and exhaustive list of all the possible strengths that a person can have and they would welcome the opportunity to add some additional epithets or values. When asked for possible additional strengths, one pupil in particular highlighted the importance of tactics and strategic thinking, as well as the capacity to recover from negative feelings.

Also, further simplification in the wording of the 24 strengths and some additional examples would help in promoting pupils' comprehension of advanced terminology (i.e., 'prudence'). As regards the selection of the material, staff suggested that a wider variety of activities would be helpful to stimulate pupils' interest. Some activities were viewed as repetitive and the use of the same overarching framework (i.e. the 24 strengths table) seemed to bring disengagement rather than consistency. In order to use more expedient material, a wider variety of activities could have been used, based on the different learning modalities and styles (Reiff, 1992), which could provide pupils with opportunities to develop through multi-sensory learning (Solity, 2008).

5.3.6 RQ6: How can practice involving a strength-based intervention improve in schools?

Given the evaluative nature of the study, it was considered important to examine what the findings convey in terms of improvements for professional practice. To outline potential improvements, the two data sets need to be approached holistically. The study's high ecological validity allows for this discussion to take place, particularly because the intervention took place in the school setting and was co-facilitated by school staff. In this instance, the quantitative findings could produce information regarding what was or was not working and the qualitative findings could demonstrate the reasons behind these functions. The interviews offered valuable feedback which can enhance practice, provided that it is used constructively. The following section will outline how the data and the recommendations of the interviewees tie in with the literature.

To begin with, the quantitative analyses suggested that the programme had no significant impact. No significant improvements, or deterioration were noted for the whole population of the study or for the two subgroups separately. However, when comparing the two subgroups, significant differences were noted. This could be an indication that pupils AROE have a wider margin for improvements or that adult input affects them significantly more than those non AROE.

Further potential improvements were revealed about pupils through interviews. Staff responses reflected a need to pass the new information to teachers and to use the principles of the programme across different lessons. Rather than utilising the programme in a segregated manner, interest was generated in how to ensure consistency in staff practices and inform decision making about pupil support. Valuable information was given by pupils during the sessions, as part of the self-reflection discussions. The main suggestion of the facilitators was to use it in useful and meaningful ways across all school staff, to facilitate pupils' welfare in school. In relation to this, work undertaken by Bill Rogers (2000) highlighted the importance of a collaborative and communicative approach between staff in order for change to occur. Moreover, he noted that sharing concerns and opportunities about pupils is essential to achieving change.

Interviewees also suggested changes that are in agreement with Luiselli, Putnam, Handler and Feinberg (2005), who looked at effective strategies for managing challenging behaviour. They concluded that social competency building, consistent and preventative practices and curriculum modifications increase engagement. These

findings are commensurate with the interviewees' accounts, which captured that adult support to minimise shyness and adopting a system-wide approach can prove useful.

Adult availability and proximity were mentioned by pupils AROE as one area for further improvement. Individual meetings, where the pupils can express themselves in an environment free from potential peer criticism and opportunities for one-to-one interaction, seemed important. This preference for individual as opposed to group sessions has been researched by Holmes and Kivlighan (2000), who looked into the processes and the outcomes of the two types of therapeutic interventions. They found that the two types contained different components; group therapy is associated with relationship outcomes, whereas emotional awareness and problem definition / change are central in individual sessions. Thus, different pupils will benefit from a different type and, ideally, schools should adhere to the needs of each individual. Nevertheless, the feasibility and practicalities of implementing therapeutic programmes need to be taken into consideration. In their meta-analysis of individual and group therapies, McRoberts, Burlingame and Hoag (1998) found that as long as the principles, methodology, therapist and treatment variables remain stable, the outcomes of the two types are equivalent, and they concluded that the group type is frequently considered more advantageous for time and cost-effectiveness reasons.

Furthermore, implications about the need to develop closer relationships are linked to attachment theory and can indicate an unmet need for nurture. Attachment theory was originated by John Bowlby (1988), who proposed that one-to-one therapeutic relationship can function as an impetus for exploration and restructuring of internal working models and attachment figures. This level of safety is available in one-to-one meetings, where the individual can feel protected and this could be the underlying reason why additional time alone with an adult was requested by pupils. This could also explain the differences in the scores of the two subgroups. Perhaps more vulnerable populations are in greater need of adult support and are therefore influenced to a greater extend whereas those who raise no concern would maintain a less modifiable profile.

5.3.7 RQ7: Can strength-based interventions be effective in increasing wellbeing and reducing school exclusions?

Ryff (1989) attempted to operationalise the dimensions of wellbeing and produced a six-factor model which encompassed: Self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth. However, more recent literature in the area highlighted the need for a universal definition, rather than a description of the segregated areas that wellbeing encompasses alone. Dodge, Daly, Huyton and Sanders (2012) proposed that wellbeing entails the notion of homeostasis between resources and challenges in life. This definition was considered as a measurable and optimistic view which can inform professional practice.

The intervention was cited by interviewees as having positively affected some aspects of wellbeing. Their accounts portrayed a number of areas that are directly associated with improvements in pupil welfare and could indirectly influence their susceptibility to behaviour misconduct. The first notable consequence of the programme was the shift in participants' perceptions about themselves, about people around them and in their views about schools. Although not all pupils and staff assented to this opinion, there was a strong indication that pupils started developing a non-judgemental approach to people around them. This enhanced understanding of individual differences is inextricably linked to unconditional positive regard and an empathic approach to interacting with others (Rogers, 1959). Some pupils started identifying themselves with others through recognising common strengths and this is linked to Rogers's view that receiving another's internal frame of reference is the basis of empathic relationships. Honesty and authenticity were also prevalent in participants' accounts, which are reflected in positive psychology principles (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Improvements in social skills, changes in emotions about self and increased acceptance were evident in participants' accounts, although this was not validated by the quantitative data. Harris and Brown (2010) concluded that mixed methodology studies consisting of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews sometimes fail to reach consensus due to methodological limitations; this topic will be further discussed as part of the critique of the current study. Nevertheless, pupils felt that helpfulness was fostered in the programme and they were given the opportunity to offer and receive help. This supportive environment could be the reason for them developing a sense of collaboration and enhancing their positive relations with peers.

Data from the current study suggest that pupils not AROE were typically not given many opportunities at school for personal growth and self-acceptance, as opposed to vulnerable populations. This lower level of adult support for the former group may be reasonable, to a certain extent; however, pupils not AROE seemed to value the opportunity for adult input and for engaging in activities of a non-academic orientation. The focus on this group stems from the positive psychology position that by concentrating on what works and what can be improved in life, individuals can achieve positive outcomes for all (Peterson, 2006). Early intervention is closely associated with this philosophy and the importance of working with pupils AROE in schools, rather than in segregated settings (i.e., PRUs) (DfES, 2007). Instead of dealing with problems and focusing on deficits, adaptability and optimal human functioning should be reinforced as a preventative measure (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Identification and application of strengths have been recognised as a means to develop mastery and high performance (Clifton & Anderson, 2002), enhance personal growth (Proctor & Fox Eades, 2009) and improve self-esteem (Ncube, 2006). Interviewees expressed that the programme helped pupils acknowledge some of their strengths. Some of them also used the programme's activities as an impetus to help peers discover their own strengths. Furthermore, pupils had the opportunity to explore theoretically potential applications of their strengths. It would be interesting to explore whether they actually generalised these innate resources across different settings on an everyday, practical level. Taking into consideration the definition of wellbeing outlined above, strengths can be viewed as the resources that help maintain the wellbeing equilibrium balance in the face of adversity. In light of this, informing pupils about their resources and how they can use them, could help them buffer the challenges in life and enhance resilience (Yates & Masten, 2004).

The current study's initial ambitious aim of minimising school exclusions has not been verified by the findings. No radical improvement in behaviour and school engagement were noted from the pre and post measurements of the SDQ or the Student Engagement Instrument. However, pupils' reports reflected a desire to avoid getting into 'trouble', engage more with school work and interact positively with peers. There are multiple possible explanations for the quantitative findings. Staff considered the short duration of the programme as the prime reason, followed by the limited relation between the activities and the school curriculum. Nevertheless, pupils felt that the

programme helped them improve their behaviour at school somewhat and that they became more willing to get involved with school-related procedures.

According to the existing literature, self-awareness approaches have successfully been used in the past to prevent exclusions (Burton, 2006), and both Personal Construct Psychology research (Hardman, 2001) and CBT intervention programmes resulted in significant behaviour improvements for pupils AROE (Humphrey & Brooks, 2006). However, the current study's findings do not produce evidence for the strength-based effectiveness of the programmes in terms of minimising exclusions. Perhaps one of the reasons for this is that the programme involved targeted intervention that took place once a week, for only five weeks. Longer, more intense or school-wide interventions, could have potentially produced different results. In addition, the greater focus on strengths, rather than in ways to empower different aspects of the pupils' lives, could be another reason for the current results. In a strength-based study (Day-Vinez and Terriquez, 2008) that focused on promoting responsibility, leadership and resilience, the results revealed a significant reduction in school exclusions.

5.4 Applying a systemic perspective to the findings

In this section a brief review and conceptual positioning of the findings through the lens of a systemic model is presented. The complexity of human behaviour and the need to adopt a holistic perspective are pointed out in Miller's critique of positive psychology (Miller, 2008). He suggests that a person's thoughts and feelings are inseparably linked to their personal narrative, which is embedded in a particular context. Similarly, recent literature has pointed out that positive psychology tends to have a limited view of social dimensions and usually only takes into account the microsystem (Lomas, Hefferon & Ivztan, 2014a). Indeed, merely focusing on inner tendencies or assets cannot be sufficient in understanding, interpreting and shifting behaviours. A wider systemic approach to intervention through Bronfenbrenner's Ecosystemic model (1979) can shed light to this area, via the three central themes of his theory: social and historical context, the active person, and the impossibility of understanding individual developmental process in isolation (Darling, 2007; p. 205).

In the current study, both the age of the participants and their status need to be taken into consideration in the first stage of the analysis. The Layered Integrated Framework Example (LIFE) model (Lomas, Hefferon & Ivztan, 2014b) presents

biological factors and embodies sensations as potential means to understanding wellbeing. Although physiological components were not revealed from the data, further traits associated with adolescence were reflected at a microsystem level. Keeping in mind that half of the population that receives a school exclusion attend Year 9 and Year 10 (DCSF 2009; DfE, 2013a), suggests that this is probably an overly sensitive life period, in terms of emotional and behaviour development. The innate resources that pupils felt were cultivated through the intervention could be particularly helpful at this level. In addition, the task itself and the way it was perceived by pupils can be seen as affecting the child's microsystem. Beaver (2011) views tasks as concrete methods for achieving systemic change and reorganising relationships. This reveals the value of placing the programme in the social context and the importance of tailoring it based on the abilities and learning styles of the person (O'Connor & Simic, 2002).

At this level, quality of life can be promoted through positive education on an individual therapeutic basis (Fernandez-Rios & Novo, 2012). From the interviews, it became apparent that pupils viewed the teacher–pupil relationships as central and they seemed to value the environment's supportive framework. They recognised that close relationships with school staff are significant and recommended ideas for further proximity. In addition, relationships at a peer group level seemed to flourish through the group work, the setup of the intervention and the focus on social interactions. Although the study aimed to intervene at all levels, including the mesosystemic level, no findings were revealed for the interactions between the systems around the child, as there was no exploration of family factors to ascertain effects on home life.

Finally, the values and ethos of the programme, identified by the semi-structured interviews, are part of the exosystem, a wider framework that indirectly affects the individual. This study revealed that there is a need to ensure the approaches, techniques and principles applied at a group level, to a more holistic, school-wide approach. In this organisational level, the school leadership can formulate different motivation priorities (Fernandez-Rios & Novo, 2012) and affect pupil attitudes in school. Indeed, the increasing focus on academic attainment does not always allow schools to fulfil their psychosocial targets and promote wellbeing; therefore, a need for further intervention at this level is required. Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich and Linkins (2009) examined an example of a programme designed to teach positive psychology approaches to an entire school. Working at the level of *politics*, they embedded said approaches into the educational reality of Geelong Grammar School in Australia and argued that this

initiative could function as the foundation for both attainment and wellbeing. However, even wider systems influence the child. Societal priorities at present focus on materialistic values as paths to happiness and tend to disregard values and ethical aspects (Sachs, 2011). They tend to convey unhelpful messages to adolescents who seek meaning in many aspects of their life (Roper & Shah, 2007). Hedonic and utilitarian theories of happiness (Boniwell, 2012) seem to be linked more to these life attitudes, and this reveals further challenges in instilling positive psychology principles at different organic levels.

5.5 Reflexivity and reflective diary discussion

Reflexivity as a notion derives from critical and experiential qualitative research methodology (Shaw, 2010). It is essentially concerned with the researcher's awareness of the impact of previous life experiences on the current research journey (McGhee, Marland & Atkinson, 2007), and is particularly pertinent to cases where the researcher and the person analysing the data are the same. The current study cannot be free from some level of subjectivity and self-aware meta-analysis is essential to affirm the validity of the research (Finlay, 2002). As a trainee EP with previous experience of working with challenging children and young people, the researcher developed an interest in how to support this population using novel psychological theory and practice. Personal interest and devotion to positive psychology, alongside the different relationships developed with the three secondary schools, could also have influenced the interventions, the interviews and the interpretations of the qualitative findings. Despite efforts to minimise bias by ensuring that some sessions were facilitated by school staff and by triangulating information using (interviews from both pupils and staff), there are still elements of personal views. Addressing and exploring these views can enhance the study's ethical value (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). The researcher's personal experience of a more traditional educational system outside the UK could have resulted in a more teacher-centred and conventional approach in terms of the intervention design. In addition, the strong emphasis on eudaimonia and ancient Greek philosophy stems from the researcher's ethnic and educational background. Finally, having no previous history of school exclusion, the researcher's understanding of the contributing reasons is limited.

Furthermore, the researcher used Schön's model of reflection in action and reflection on action (Schön, 1991). The former was associated with engaging with the process and experience whilst involved in the situation. The latter is focusing on thinking about past actions, evaluating them and recognising outcomes. Within this framework, the researcher views the current study as an opportunity to develop and as a means to improve a range of research and practical skills. At this point it is worth mentioning the study's initial ambitious plan. The researcher was aiming to carry out an 8-week intervention programme and a follow-up measurement was proposed to take place two months after the end of the intervention. Due to time constraints and in order to ensure consistency across the three secondary schools, this plan was reassessed and transformed into a more realistic target. Looking at things that could be done differently in the future, several lessons have emerged from the process. Some of them are: the need to arrange initial meetings with parents and pupils to accelerate the procedure of obtaining informed consent; the importance of collecting more information about pupils and any potential SEN; making sure that the groups are of equal size; and clarifying expectations to co-facilitators.

5.6 Implications for educational practice

In this section, broader implications in relation to the study's findings will be discussed. School professionals, and especially those working with pupils AROE, could be encouraged to develop their skills in adopting and adapting strength-based practice. To begin with, they could provide opportunities for strength-based education and try to instil some positive psychology principles to pupils regardless of the nature of their needs. Emphasis could be placed on 'what works' for each pupil, aptitudes, skills and interests. Furthermore, harnessing approaches which link identification of strengths with applications across various areas of the school life could be particularly helpful. Interviews with staff highlighted this need and reflected an interest in embedding positive psychology in everyday lessons. Therefore, staff could support pupils in identifying their strengths at the beginning of each academic year and then try to find creative ways to celebrate and apply these resources in less structured lessons (i.e., Art, PSHCE, PE). Alternatively, teachers could provide positive feedback during lessons about strengths used, giving a more fluid nuance to strengths and making them look less like fixed personality traits.

There is some evidence that strength-based interventions can be effective in enhancing school engagement, social skills and perception of self and others. This suggests that such programmes could be incorporated in preventative behaviour plans or be used to support the reintegration of excluded pupils back to mainstream school.

The current findings are congruent with previous research in strength-based interventions suggesting that an individual or group level approach to positive psychology is not as effective as a whole school approach. Rather, emphasis should be placed in changing the school climate (Sharp & Thomson, 1994). This is associated with school ethos and involving the school community is essential, to address different levels of systems. Changing the school climate could also imply changes in policies and practices to managing behaviour and rewards. The underlying philosophy should permeate the practice of all school staff, in order to ensure consistency and effectively communicate this set of values to pupils.

5.7 Implications for Educational Psychologists

Practical and theoretical issues pertaining to the EP profession will be presented in this section. Firstly, the findings of the study will be used to inform recommendations for EPs, as well as to encourage new practices. Secondly, implications for the development of psychological theory, and in particular positive psychology theory, will be discussed.

Interviewees found that the newly formed group and the novelty in the intervention content hindered the pupils' capacity to engage with the programme initially. To avoid shyness and nervousness at the beginning of the sessions, EPs could prepare pupils in advance about what they are going to experience. Rather than having only one pre-meeting to gain pupils' consent, further time could be devoted to familiarising them with the setup of the intervention, their peers in the group and the EP as an external professional. In relation to the latter point, child-friendly handouts could be given to pupils to remind them of the role of the EP.

In addition, for pupils who have preference for individual sessions, EPs could offer opportunities for private discussions, where the sense of safety is more enhanced. In essence, it is important for EPs to keep in mind attachment needs (Bowlby, 1988) and the positive impact of creating a nurturing environment, especially for the emotionally vulnerable individuals. The fundamentals of attachment theory and the value of

attunement (Ainsworth, 1969), empathy and emotional availability are significant factors fostering positive working relationships. Further, EPs designing interventions with emotionally and behaviourally sensitive pupils could promote emotional regulation (Bandura, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Gerbino & Pastorelli, 2003), by ensuring that reliable and containing adults are available within predictable and safe environments.

When working with pupils who are AROE, it would be helpful for EPs to ascertain the nature and level of need, and ensure they can access the material of the programme. This is especially important for preventative group work and helps in differentiating the activities according to the different learning styles. Moreover, in terms of designing and delivering an intervention, a number of elements should be taken into consideration. EPs should receive appropriate supervision and training from specialists in the area of the intervention to ensure quality of practice. This will allow them to design the intervention carefully and adhere to the therapeutic principles of the theory. In addition, it is important to monitor progress in between sessions and be prepared to adapt the content and the resources used.

In terms of strength-based interventions, the findings of the study are in line with previous literature, where the need to incorporate strengths into various tasks was highlighted (Bozic, 2013). For example, strengths could be used to counterbalance an area of difficulty that the student might have. Further, through strengths, pupils and staff could reconstruct problems (e.g., problematic behaviours seen as a reaction to an unfair system) and evoke a change in the environment and the systems around them.

Furthermore, the participants in this study showed a need to take ownership of their strengths. They had a predetermined personal understanding of what can be seen as an internal resource and they seemed to want to contribute and formulate the programme according to their beliefs. Based on this finding, it would be interesting for EPs to view strengths identification and development through the lens of PCP. The use of personal constructs could be enlightening in this area and could help explore perceptions and meanings of the way pupils view their behaviour and assets. Ideas can be drawn from Heather Moran's work in helping children envisage their ideal self (Moran, 2001), and could offer a deeper level of assessing and intervening.

Given the emerging emphasis on strengths in the new SEN Code of Practice (DfE, 2014c), it is important for EPs to incorporate this way of thinking into their work. The fundamental belief of positive psychology that every individual has some innate resources that could be used for his or her benefit permeates the new legislation, and

promotes new models of assessment and intervention. In the confines of this framework, EPs should be alert and aware of how to identify and develop strengths within the individual, their family and the wider environment (e.g., school or community). This is further associated with the need for positive psychology to recognise the difficulties in life, including social inequalities (Compton, 2005), in order to enrich human life. These ideas could be instilled to create a balance between adversities in life and aspects of human flourishing.

5.8 Methodological limitations and critique of the approach

Despite efforts to design this study cautiously and meticulously, some shortcomings are clear and should be taken into account when interpreting the current findings. Initially, as this study evolved out of real world research, the practicalities, time constraints and ethical considerations did not allow for a control group. Clearly, this study used a small sample and the overall duration was shorter than in previously identified research. Working within the constraints of schools as organizations was one of the causes of this limitation. This is also associated with the lack of power calculation and the statistically weak findings. Although the data were enriched by both pupils and school staff accounts, it has not been possible to ascertain parents' views, which would offer information from the home context and reveal whether any changes had generalised.

In addition, considerations about the quality of delivery are worth mentioning in this section, given that the researcher developed the intervention without previous specialist training in the area. According to Orlinsky, Rønnestad and Willutzki (2004), the therapist adherence and skilfulness are two variables that heavily affect the process. Further, it has not been possible to isolate the confounding variables and assure that any change noted has been the result of the strength-based intervention.

Further pragmatic considerations should be explored in relation to the researcher's multiple roles. A single person was responsible for the design, facilitation, interviewing of participants and data analysis. Inevitably, a level of subjectivity has influenced this study, and could affect the trustworthiness and authenticity (Bryman, 2012) of the findings. With regard to the latter two terms, the following points should be acknowledged: some level of trustworthiness was achieved, on the basis of employing a well established method (thematic analysis); and the researcher ensured familiarisation with the cultural context of the study (Shenton, 2004). However, the

sample was not randomly selected and only some triangulation was done. In terms of authenticity, the researcher attempted to promote fairness (Seale, 1999) by presenting a range of multiple realities through the use of psychological theories to explain phenomena and present various possible interpretations.

Another limitation was present in terms of the thematic analysis and its limited value in higher level interpretation stages. In particular, little was explored in relation to the language used by the participants and possible underlying meanings stemming from the way the individuals expressed themselves. This was also acknowledged by Braun and Clarke (2013) who recognised this as an area of weakness, which jeopardizes the method's interpretive power if not used within an existing framework. Indeed, the methods adopted in this study did not allow exploration as to how the participants made sense of the intervention, the principles or the notion of strengths.

In addition, the research itself indicated some limitations in relation to positive psychology. Alistair Miller (2008) highlights that the essence of strengths cannot be distinguished from life itself, from the values, beliefs, motives and particular contexts that the individual experiences. He also points out that viewing particular skills as positive is *ipso facto* controversial. In addition, the perception that individuals function deliberately and are in full control of their behaviours is questionable. Such a level of consciousness would disregard the person's instincts, passions and feelings, which are intertwined with their history and particular circumstances.

Additionally, Wilding and Griffey (2015) examined Seligman's 24 strengths classification from a social constructionist perspective and emphasised the need to be culturally sensitive, especially when working with non-Western populations. They highlight that it is essential to be mindful of potential bias, which could be based on the researcher's own background. Congruent with this claim, data from the current study revealed that the classification of strengths lacks the broadness required to describe the magnitude of human positive resources. Wilding and Griffey also pointed out the hazards of designing within-person interventions, if assessment was to be based merely on assessing individual strengths. This underestimates the impact of the different systems on the individual and solely places the responsibility for change within the person.

5.9 Unique contribution and recommendations for future research

Despite an emerging interest in strength-based approaches, there was a surprisingly small volume of studies focusing on pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, not to mention that no single study was addressing the needs of pupils AROE. It was anticipated that the research would improve the quality of practice for EPs and professionals working at secondary schools, through evidence-based practice. This study provides substantial information in relation to school interventions, positive psychology and strength-based approaches. In addition, it affirms the importance for whole-school approaches of instilling an ethos across all systems. As such, the researcher is hoping that the study will be helpful to researchers and practitioners who are trying out new methods for supporting all pupils within secondary schools.

Although this study identified different ways of using strength-based approaches most helpfully, further research could look into this area in the long term. The current research could potentially be described as an introduction in the area and it would be interesting to clarify how pupils and staff perceive such an intervention longitudinally. Moreover, given that the study took place in a culturally diverse local authority, where a high proportion of pupils comes from a non-British background, additional research could address this potential bias, and use a strengths classification that is recognised and constructed by individuals from different cultures.

The current small-scale study had a number of participant and time constraints, which did not allow for change to take place within higher levels of the school as an organisation. It would be useful for research to explore how a whole-school strength-based approach could affect pupils AROE. Finally, another gap in the research concerns the parents' voice. In the present research, the views of school staff were considered significant in demonstrating changes within the educational setting, changes in school engagement and behaviour throughout the school day. Further research could take into account parental perceptions and explore how strengths could be incorporated into family support. Finally, the significant discrepancy in terms of how the two subgroups have been affected by the study is worth investigating and researchers could look into the different elements that caused this variance.

5.10 Concluding comment

This small scale research was designed to unveil the usefulness of strength-based approaches and how they could develop further. It also aimed to operationalise and assess the impact of this approach across various areas. Methodological shortcomings are present, but keeping this *caveat* in mind, the current study achieved its purpose to some extent. Not only did it reveal areas of progress for the participants, but it also highlighted various routes for improving professional practice. As the findings suggest, pupils started acknowledging strengths and found ways to use them on a more frequent basis. Their perceptions of themselves and others seemed to have shifted and their empathy was promoted, whilst their social skills developed.

Despite efforts to use this approach in a continuous fashion, strength-based approaches in the future should be used in a more holistic and pervasive way. In the journey towards the gold standard, the positive psychology doctrine could become a way of living by permeating different systems' ideologies (i.e., family and whole-school level). This can improve the interactions between the subsystems, ensure consistency and potentially better outcomes. In addition, strengths should be viewed through a social constructionist tenet, where significance is placed on what is meaningful for the individual and how each individual perceives the notion of strengths. Working with what is important for each particular person in his or her context can promote ownership and enhanced engagement with the process.

In terms of professional practice, assessment of the positives within the individual alongside difficulties and areas for improvement could give a more balanced profile of the child or young person. This could also be generalised across the population. It would indeed be a step forward in terms of adopting a more constructive outlook on life if people magnified success as much as they magnified misfortune.

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Appendix 1: Detailed strategy for systematic literature review 1

Electronic databases
Academic Search Complete (EBSCO)
British Education Index
Education Research Complete (EBSCO)
ERIC
GoogleScholar
PsychInfo (EBSCO)
Science Direct
Taylor & Francis
Wiley Online Library

Search strategy using combinations of the following keywords

Keyword 1: Age group	Keyword 2: Practitioner involvement	Keyword 3: Approach
Student	Intervention	Positive psychology
Pupil	Approach	Positive approach
Child	Technique	Strengths based
Adolescent	Programme	Strength based
Teenager	Treatment	Assets
Young person	Strategy	Skills
Young people	Technique	Skills-based
Secondary school	Support	Resource
KS3	Mentoring	Talents
KS4	Development	
	Advice	
	Plan	

Whenever possible, Boolean search mode was used in the current review; this uses **AND**, **OR** and **NOT** as search operators to combine search terms and define inclusion and exclusion criteria. Alternatively, connectors were used to combine keywords and create phrases.

Screening process

- Studies were excluded if they fulfilled at least one of the exclusion criteria

	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Area of interest	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on Positive Psychology Studies on Strength based interventions Taking place in school settings Focus on children and young people Studies using existing interventions Studies focussing on the effectiveness of intervention 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> No relevance to Positive Psychology No relevance to strength based interventions No relevance to EP practice Not concerned with education / schools Participants in EYFS or below
Context	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Studies were conducted after 1994 Written in English Worldwide studies 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Studies conducted before 1994 Not written in English
Method of study	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed methodology Evaluative methodology Qualitative study Quantitative (empirical) study Full text Peer reviewed study 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Based on personal opinion No full text Reviews

Further sources

- Prior knowledge in the subject was used to identify relevant articles
- Additional records were identified through hand-searching of references

Appendix 2: Detailed strategy for systematic literature review 2

Electronic databases
Academic Search Complete (EBSCO)
British Education Index
Education Research Complete (EBSCO)
ERIC
GoogleScholar
PsychInfo (EBSCO)
Science Direct
Taylor & Francis
Wiley Online Library

Search strategy using combinations of the following keywords

Keyword 1: Age group	Keyword 2: Practitioner involvement	Keyword 3: Target group
Student	Intervention	Exclusion
Pupil	Approach	Excluded
Child	Technique	At risk of exclusion
Adolescent	Programme	Expulsion
Teenager	Treatment	Suspension
Young person	Strategy	Suspend
Young people	Technique	Expel
Primary school	Support	Disruptive behaviour
Secondary school	Mentoring	Challenging behaviour
KS2	Development	Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)
KS3	Advice	
KS4	Plan	

Whenever possible, Boolean search mode was used in the current review; this uses **AND**, **OR** and **NOT** as search operators to combine search terms and define inclusion and exclusion criteria. Alternatively, connectors were used to combine keywords and create phrases.

Screening process

- Studies were excluded if they fulfilled at least one of the exclusion criteria

	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Area of interest	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on school exclusions Studies on pupils at risk of exclusion Taking place in school settings Focus on children and young people Studies using existing interventions Studies focussing on the effectiveness of intervention 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> No relevance to school exclusions No relevance to EP practice Not concerned with education / schools Participants in EYFS or below
Context	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Studies were conducted after 1994 Written in English Worldwide studies 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Studies conducted before 1994 Not written in English
Method of study	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed methodology Evaluative methodology Qualitative study Quantitative (empirical) study Full text Peer reviewed study 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Based on personal opinion No full text Reviews

Further sources

- Prior knowledge in the subject was used to identify relevant articles
- Additional records were identified through hand-searching of references

Appendix 3: Ethical approval of the research

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

Dean: Professor Mark N. O. Davies, PhD, CPsychol, CBiol.



School of Psychology Professional Doctorate Programmes

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to confirm that the Professional Doctorate candidate named in the attached ethics approval is conducting research as part of the requirements of the Professional Doctorate programme on which he/she is enrolled.

The Research Ethics Committee of the School of Psychology, University of East London, has approved this candidate's research ethics application and he/she is therefore covered by the University's indemnity insurance policy while conducting the research. This policy should normally cover for any untoward event. The University does not offer 'no fault' cover, so in the event of an untoward occurrence leading to a claim against the institution, the claimant would be obliged to bring an action against the University and seek compensation through the courts.

As the candidate is a student of the University of East London, the University will act as the sponsor of his/her research. UEL will also fund expenses arising from the research, such as photocopying and postage.

Yours faithfully,

Dr. Mark Finn

Chair of the School of Psychology Ethics Sub-Committee

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The University of East London has campuses at London Docklands and Stratford
If you have any special access or communication requirements for your visit, please let us know. MINICOM 020 8223 2853



Appendix 4: Parent invitation letter / consent form

Dear parent / carer

My name is Rodanthi, I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist working for Luton Borough Council and I am carrying out a research project in conjunction with the University of East London. Through my project I am trying to develop students' strengths and talents. I hope this project will be of real benefit to your child and I would like to ask your consent for your child to take part in the study. Please take the time to read the following information and discuss it with the school staff or with me if you wish.

- I am interested to find out more about how to help pupils identify and develop their strengths, assets and talents. I will use a fun programme which will be taught by me and a member of staff from your child's school. This research will also help professionals and schools to improve students' learning and wellbeing.
- The project will consist of two phases:
 - Phase one will include a 5 week intervention programme using strength-based strategies where your child will participate as part of a small group. Your child will complete some questionnaires before and after the programme. In addition to this, information from the school will also be collected in relation to the child's learning and wellbeing.
 - The second phase will be a 25 minute individual interview where I will ask for your child's point of view about what worked and what we could do to improve the programme. During the interviews your child will be recorded answering some questions relevant to the group work stage. A copy of the questions can be found in the last page.
- Your child does not have to take part. It is up to you and your child to decide if you agree to give consent. Also, you are free to withdraw from the research at any stage.

- All data will be confidential, and the child protection and safeguarding procedures will be followed.
- The data will be stored in an anonymised way by using a coding system so as to protect the child's identity
- If you require further information or if you wish to ask any questions you can ask a member of the school staff or speak to me in person:

Rodanthi Chatzinikolaou

Futures House, The Moakes, Luton, LU3 3QB

Tel : 07738860682

Email : Rodanthi.Chatzinikolaou@luton.gov.uk

This is to confirm that I(name) give
my consent for my child..... (name) to
participate in this study.

Signed: Date:

Appendix 5: Participant invitation letter / consent form

Dear student

We need your help! My name is Rodanthi, I am a trainee Educational Psychologist and I would like to ask you if you would take part in a research project. We are trying to find out if it is helpful for students to take part in sessions that develop their strengths and talents. Also we are interested to see what you think of these sessions and what we can do to make them better. Before you decide if you want to join in it is important to make sure that you have read and understood that:

(Tick the box if you understood)

- The project will last for 6 weeks
☐
- You will have to fill in brief questionnaires about yourself and I will ask your school to give me some information about you
☐
- You will work as part of a small group for 5 sessions (one session every week)
☐
- I will then arrange to meet with you for a short chat of about 20 minutes and ask you questions about what you think was good about the group sessions and how we can make them better. I will record this chat using a voice recorder so that I remember exactly what you told me.
☐
- You are free to stop taking part at any time if you change your mind. You do not have to give me a reason for that and you can also ask me not to use your data even after the end of the study.
☐
- We will keep your information in confidence. This means that we will only tell those who have a need or right to know.
☐

- We will keep your information anonymised. This means that nobody else will be able to find out your name or school.

☐

- I will safely store all the recordings and data for two years after the end of the study. I will then destroy them so that nobody else can find them in the future.

☐

Someone from the school can tell you more about the project and answer your questions. If you want to know more about the project you can ask me at our first meeting.



I..... understand what the project is about and I am happy to take part.

Signature.....

Date.....

Thank you

Appendix 6: Interview schedule for pupil interview

Q1: How was the project for you?

Q2: What did you like most about the project? (Prompt: Which activity / section did you like best?)

Q3: What did you like least about the project? (Prompt: Which activity / section did you like least?)

Q4: Do you think that the project made you change your mind about yourself? If so, in what direction?

Q5: Do you think that the project made you change your mind about school? If so, in what direction?

Q6: Do you think that the project made you change your mind about other people around you? If so, in what direction?

Q7: Going back to how you were before the first session, has anything changed for you?

Q8: If you could choose an activity, which one would you choose to do more often? Why?

Q9: What was helpful?

Q10: What was unhelpful?

Q11: How did the sessions make you feel?

Q12: If you could change something in the sessions what would that be? Why?

Q13: Do you have any questions relevant to the project? (Prompt: Was everything clear?)

Appendix 7: Interview schedule for staff interview

Q1: How was the project for you?

Q2: What did you like most about the project? (Prompt: Which activity / section did you like best?)

Q3: What did you like least about the project? (Prompt: Which activity / section did you like least?)

Q4: Do you think that the project helped the pupils change their mind about themselves? If so, in what direction?

Q5: Do you think that the project made the pupils change their mind about school? If so, in what direction?

Q6: Do you think that the project made the pupils change their mind about other people around them? If so, in what direction?

Q7: Going back to how they were before the first session, has anything changed for the pupils who participated in the project?

Q8: If you could choose an activity, which one would you choose to do more often? Why?

Q9: What was helpful?

Q10: What was unhelpful?

Q11: How did the sessions make you feel?

Q12: If you could change something in the sessions what would that be? Why?

Q13: Do you have any questions relevant to the project? (Prompt: Was everything clear?)

Appendix 8: Pilot study feedback

Structure of the pilot session

- 1) Introductions (name, Year group, one thing he likes)
- 2) Ice-breaker activity
- 3) General info about the programme (Duration, general aim)
- 4) Assessment of strengths – Find the 1st strength
- 5) Exploration stage
- 6) Action stage
- 7) Follow up
- 8) Feedback

Feedback questions

- A. Were the session and the activities interesting / enjoyable? (for the child's age)
- B. Were the session and the activities understood? (for the child's age)
- C. Anything found inappropriate / not understood?
- D. What are you most likely to remember from today's session?
- E. What will you most likely to use from today's session?
- F. Are you happy with the session overall? Any comments?
- G. If you could change one thing to make it better what would that be?

Appendix 9: Example of the intervention schedule

Strength Based Intervention: Session 2

ICEBREAKER ACTIVITY 5mins	Activity: ‘Two truths, one lie’
INTRODUCTION 5mins	Revisit the work that took place in session 1: Talk about the strengths presented.
INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY 10mins	Exploring my 1st strength. At this stage the pupils can start thinking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does it mean to you? • What different kinds of it are there? • How might some use it at school? • Why is it important?
ACTIVITY 1 15mins	Action stage 1 (self) Choose one of the following activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw a superhero who has your 1st strength • Can you remember somebody you know who used your 1st strength? Write or draw a story when this happened • Make up a story that contains a character or many characters who used your strength to accomplish a task • Draw a comic story where the main character is using your 1st strength
ACTIVITY 2 10mins	Action stage 2 (others) For this activity, students will need to wear name tags with their top three strengths on them. You may want to let students design the name tags themselves, or you could use the certificate on the last page of the report to make name tags. Copy the following table for all of your students. Instruct them to find three

	<p>people who have a different strength from any of their own top three, and find out what they like best about that strength. After students complete the activity, have them discuss and share what they learned about a new strength. You might list each strength on the board, along with all the words used to describe it underneath.</p>
<p>ENDING GAME</p> <p>5mins</p>	<p>Write the name of a place, person, or thing on to a small piece of paper. The other person must try and guess who or what you have written down. They are only allowed to use questions with yes/no answers. They are only allowed a maximum of 20 questions.</p>

Note: The whole of the intervention programme and the activity sheets can be made available to anyone interested, by directly contacting the researcher.

Appendix 10: Codebook

Description	Code
1. Positive general feedback on sessions / beneficial / enjoyable / fun / easy / helpful	Overall experience of the sessions
2. Positive view on principles: Free expression / honesty	Core principles of the sessions
3. Positive view on specific technique: warm-up activities, superhero, drawing, identifying strengths, slogan	Specific techniques used viewed as positive
4. Negative report on specific technique: drawing / too much artistic focus, writing	Specific techniques used viewed as negative
5. No change in self-perception / OR helpful feelings evoked: happiness, better about self / grateful. Change perceptions about self: only started to / seed planted	Self-perception outcomes
6. No change in school perception / not enough focus on school / OR changing mind about school because notices & uses strengths more in lessons. Helpful: changed mind about school – more focus on learning and better behaving / putting more effort at school / better work / self-control / better control over learning / more thinking	School-perception outcomes
7. Change in perceptions about others / and how others now perceive them through their strengths – change in perceptions about some participants.	Outcomes on perceptions of others

Description	Code
8. Sessions encouraged change in interpersonal skills: focusing on inner qualities of others, not judging them for something bad as everyone has strengths, better interactions, more effort in overcoming disagreements	Interpersonal skills development
9. Preference for technique: questionnaires, drama, kinaesthetic-active, drawing, creating	Approaches to learning in sessions
10. Helpful technique: reflecting on self and personality / thinking about self, finding out more about pupils through questionnaires	Self-reflection
11. Privacy / confidentiality: need to speak alone with adults	Privacy and confidentiality
12. Shyness, nervousness, apprehensiveness – especially at the beginning	Shyness
13. Sessions encouraged empathy: more considerate of others, more caring to others, more understanding of others, resolving disagreements more	Empathy
14. Unhelpful technique: Limited number of strengths, too fixed terms used (could have asked pupils to come up with strengths)	Fixed resources
15. Area of improvement: more strengths about everyday life (resilience – flexibility), opportunity to add extra strengths to the table	Everyday life values / strengths

Description	Code
16. Unhelpful: limited information for participation reasons, selection	Limited input on selection and reasons for participation
17. Area of improvement: 1:1 discussions on sessions' impact, and attentive listening focusing on pupil	Individual work
18. Area of improvement: minimise disruptions, carefully allocating pupils AROE in groups	Disruptive behaviours in the group
19. Helpful: clear instructions / explanations of meanings of strengths	Clear instructions and explanations about material
20. Helpful: support from peers and facilitators treating pupils nicely – supportive, adult support and answering questions	Supportive peers and adults
21. Helpful: Group work / getting to know others / sharing same strengths / sharing experiences / discussions / communicating with others / working with friends / better relationships over the course of the sessions / expanding social network / bonding / better behaviours in group / mixing different year groups / gradually engaging more	Group work and sharing
22. Helpful in life (school & home): using / generalising strengths more (forgiveness) / maybe start generalising but need more time	Using and generalising strengths
23. Helpful: using strength can improve behaviour / or started the improvement	Strengths and behaviour improvements

Description	Code
24. Helpful: setup of group promotes good habits i.e. more sitting down and work	Group and behaviour improvements
25. Helpful: listening to others, finding out more about them and recognising strengths, revealing hidden information about child from new techniques, another point of view	Getting to know others from a positive point of view
26. Helpful: sessions resulted in identifying strengths. Helpful: recognising strengths in others / celebrating strengths	Awareness of strengths
27. Helpful: strengths linked to everyday life and activities	Strengths linked to everyday life
28. Helpful: awareness of strengths and how they are used promotes using them and improvement	Awareness and links to using strengths
29. Helpful: focusing on positive feelings / experiences and shift from negative school experience / necessary for whole school approach to that	Shifting from negatives to positives
30. Unhelpful technique: group work with very low level adult instruction	Little instruction
31. Helpful: awareness of strengths improved self-worth, improved self-concept / confidence / more self-awareness overall	Self-worth and confidence
32. Helpful techniques overall: got them thinking of each strength and what it is	Exploring and understanding strengths

Description	Code
33. Helpful technique: small group (larger group not helpful)	Group size
34. Helpful: including pupils from various year groups / meeting new ppl	Different year groups included
35. Area of improvement: pick random strengths activity and explore it	Exploring a wide range of strengths
36. Not helpful or helpful: similar sets of activities for three sessions	Similar sets of activities for all the sessions
37. Taking pride on past achievements / how strengths were used	Pride in past achievements / strengths in the past
38. Not helpful: too short duration of overall programme / short sessions / too much material / not opportunities for closer work with adults / will be used again in the future / more guidance-ideas needed for generalising and future use	Duration of programme and sessions
39. Area of improvement: focus more on how to use strengths at school / link them more with everyday life	Strengths at school
40. Helpful and unhelpful for group: challenging & disruptive pupils and diversity in behaviour and ranged from challenging to timid, various backgrounds and affected concentration for some (especially one with possible ADHD), mixing friends AROE maybe not good idea. For AROE having non AROE beneficial for role models and concentration. Gender selections. Careful student selection	Pupils AROE and non AROE

Description	Code
41. Unhelpful: facilitator not knowing the pupils well	Facilitators now knowing the pupils well
42. Selected year group too immature for change, but early intervention and some work with pupils AROE soon is helpful	Intervention for KS3
43. Helpful: including non-AROE pupils as usually left out, good to reward them	Pupils non-AROE not usually participating in interventions
44. Differentiation: minimise disruptions (ADHD), minimise abstract material (ASD), activities linked to pupils' interest, use 1:1, ask pupil now they want to differentiate, mediated learning by peers	Differentiation

Appendix 11: Example of coded transcript

Stanley	
[Start of recorded material]	
Interviewer:	So first of all, thank you Stanley for agreeing to be interviewed by me, um, and of course our discussion will be confidential. Of course you know what this means ((pause)) and I will only, uh, give out information if you or someone else is in danger, okay, everything else will be anonymized and your name and will not be shared anyway. Okay, alright so, um, how were the sessions for you, in general, how were they?
Stanley:	Initially the sessions were quite difficult because there was a peer group that, er, hadn't had, um, an opportunity to work together but as... over the weeks their relationships started to develop and then the group tended to pull together, erm, and that meant that towards the end the quality of the work that you were asking them to complete actually, er, was better, so it felt better for me then. Um, I think that the, um, the concept of reflections for the students was really good. I really like the idea of them having to reflect on, um, some of their own personal strengths which was a really good idea because they were... they are at a point in their lives where reflection, um, is more about, um, things that affect them, um, at home and not necessarily within their school life and it was a good time... opportunity to get them to reflect on strengths that might affect them in school as well as in their home life.
Interviewer:	Huh-huh. Okay, so would you describe your overall experience in these sessions?
Stanley:	The overall experience is, er, what I expected really, working with this sort of group, um, with a group of students, some of them were quite difficult, some of them are quite challenging, um, yet others were quite, um, timid, and lacked self esteem which, um, which was difficult to overcome as a sort of facilitator to try and get them to integrate into the group, but, um, and this last session today, one or two of the students that said that they didn't enjoy it initially actually said that they have enjoyed coming in and they have now seen that they have got a different set of relationships in their own, in their own peer group.
Interviewer:	Huh-huh, okay. Um, what did you like most about these sessions?
Stanley:	Um, I liked seeing the bonding effect around the theme. I liked seeing that the students can realize that they have got strengths and they are identifying their inner strengths was really good. I think that some of them had never ever thought that they had anything positive to offer and that was starting to come through towards the end and, you know, as well they see that there was more work to do and it would have been nice to continue on for another three/four/five weeks to see where they
- 1 -	

Difficult as a new group.
Improvements in relationships

Reflection on self qualities.
Identification of strengths
Strengths across school and home setting

Difficult pupil background and challenges.
Positive social relationships developed

Social group.
Identification of strengths.
New positive focus/shift
Duration of the programme

were going and sort of develop, tease out some of the, um, the initial thoughts that I am having on what they have, on what they have experienced.

Interviewer: Hub-huh, and what did you like least?

Stanley: Probably their behaviour initially and the group setting. Um, I didn't know the students. Er, there were certain names that I knew, I knew the names but not necessary the students, but you know the teacher/pupil relationship is quite difficult because I remember it was on a quite short a timescale with you running some of the groups and observing what was going on, I found that quite difficult.

Interviewer: Hub-huh.

Stanley: Um, another time, with the same group, it would be easier now, because I have got you, you've started to build the relationships with them.

Interviewer: Hub-huh, okay. Do you think that the sessions have helped the pupils change their mind about themselves?

Stanley: Probably too short I would think to change their minds. To change their minds to get them thinking, yes, to start them off, yes, but possibly but to actually change things, not sure yet. They are quite... year seven, quite a young year group, still quite impressionable and whether they've, whether they've got the character, the strength in character to actually change themselves yet, I don't know but this might be a start, start of the process that they might be able to develop on.

Interviewer: Hub-huh, okay, and do you think that that project helped other pupils change their mind about school maybe?

Stanley: Yeah, I think, I think for some of them, um, they were questioning quite informally as to why they were in this group and what, how they were selected, and we were trying to give them an overview of that and they found it quite nice that they had been selected for something that wasn't a curriculum based activity. Some of the pupils don't have... if they're, if they are being naughty and they get selected for a group, if they are one of the pupils that doesn't normally get involved with being naughty, they don't really get singled out for a group like this, it was quite nice for them to be involved in that, so yeah, I think they did.

Interviewer: So are you talking about the mainstream pupils?

Stanley: Yeah, the main... well they are all, yeah, it is the coes, you know, the gifted and talented perhaps, you know the higher achievers, yeah, yeah. Yeah, they don't always get singled out for something that is particularly that they can see quite as a positive experience. They might get singled out for more literacy, they might get singled out for more numeracy which they might not necessarily see as a reward or as a...

Facilitator not knowing the pupils well in advance.

Short duration of the programme

Adult relationship with pupils.

Duration of the programme start of possible change.

Early intervention

Unclear reasons for selection.

Working with pupils who raise no concerns.

Reward for individuals who raise no concerns

and this was quite a nice, you know, initially, there was a lot of apprehension about joining this group but once they, um, once they knew what it was about, the attendance was very good, we didn't have anybody turn up late as we did in the first couple of weeks, they said that they couldn't find the room but we are not sure about that but once they started to jell as a group, and they liked the activity, they thought it was a positive thing to come along to.

Interviewer: Good, good. Um, do you think that they changed their mind about other pupils maybe?

Stanley: I think they changed their mind about other people in the group. I think they saw some of their own weaknesses and strengths in other people, some of their own and when they heard what the other people strengths were, and how they perceived themselves, I think they saw that, yeah... particularly in the group. I'm not sure they would take that as an extension outside, that would probably take a little bit longer but I think within this group and they are interacting with people that they normally wouldn't associate with which was quite positive in here and the fact... this last session on the last day, I asked them to sit together and there was really a sort of a social group appearing from the work that they have been doing.

Interviewer: Nice, okay. Um, going back to how they were before they started, do you think, has anything changed about those pupils?

Stanley: Um, one or two of them, um, yeah, I think they have. Um, what's happened is, they've realized that they are not always in trouble and sometimes when they are asked to come to a group like this, it's for their own benefit. Um, now, yeah, there is one or two that definitely realized it that the intervention work that is being offered can help them, yeah, so I think it can.

Interviewer: Okay, if you could choose an activity to do more often with the pupils, which one will you choose?

Stanley: Communication, talking about their strengths in a group, listening skills around their strength and some of their weaknesses. If they didn't identify strength would be the actual communication side of it, and developing different ways and probably some role play would be quite good to help them to realize how, how their strength might influence somebody else in a positive or a negative manner.

Interviewer: Hub-hub, so what do you think was helpful?

Stanley: What? Overall, the whole group?

Interviewer: Overall, yeah.

Stressful at Start

Pupils' positive perceptions about the programme

Identifying self with others.

Seeing strengths in others.

Duration of the programme

Working with peers from different classes

Focusing on positives rather than problems.

Helpful techniques and communication

Further ideas for interactive activities.

Stanley: As I said, before, I think the... putting the group together, different people from different aspect of the school, working together, seeing other people's strengths. If you like, being honest and open about the way they felt about certain things and how they perceived themselves, and really sort of the reflections of it.

Interviewer: Huh-huh. Okay, and was anything helpful for you?

Stanley: Working with this group, as I would probably see them again at, we don't normally start working with the year seven group; I normally get a group like this in year eight or nine. It's quite nice to work with them now, it's nice to know some of the characters, some of their, some of their, um, the way they perceive their own strengths was quite nice because then I can work on that at a later date so, yeah, getting to know them quite earlier on, building a relationship with them.

Interviewer: Okay, was there anything that was not helpful?

Stanley: Was?

Interviewer: Was there anything that was not helpful somehow?

Stanley: I think the group size, initially, was too big. I think and that wasn't very helpful. The worksheets were too complicated for some of the students. Um, they needed differentiation of particularly the language, and the terminology and they could have, um, they could have helped develop some of the questions around a theme, you could have got the same questions with the students put it in their own language perhaps so they could have developed some of the... some of the [unclear recording] could have been developed by the pupil, so more pupil participation.

Interviewer: Huh-huh, okay. Um, how did the sessions make you feel overall?

Stanley: Um, the first one or two I was quite apprehensive as to how they were going to develop, how they were going to work through but in the later stage it was not a problem.

Interviewer: Okay and how do you think the pupils felt?

Stanley: Um, well I would think that they enjoyed... the ones who stayed with us right away through, and we did have one or two problems with consent and getting them out of the lesson to get them here, but the group that we ended up with I think they enjoyed the group and they have said today that they would like to come back and do a similar or a different group.

Interviewer: Okay, good it's good to know. Okay, um, if you could change something in the sessions, what would that be?

Various pupils' backgrounds
Openness and honesty

Early involvement of professionals and links with positive outcomes.

Unhelpful group size
Material suitability and differentiation

Pupils to formulate the intervention material - language

Adult apprehension in the beginning.

Pupils positive view on the programme

Pupils engaging more with interventions

Stanley: Probably the environment, this classroom environment hasn't been ideal, um, for a socially active group sitting in a classroom that is laid out for lessons, wasn't ideal. We tried to adapt to it but that wasn't very successful every time and 45 minutes probably was a bit too short. So extending your time, probably about another half of an hour, you know. Um, one of the children, the pupil didn't like, they don't really respond to longer lessons but they will respond to other longer activity-based group like this so I think we could have had a bit more time.

Interviewer: I see, that's good, okay. Um, what's... do you think that there was something that wasn't very clear in the sessions?

Stanley: It would only be the format of the worksheets. I think for the students it would have been the most tricky part and the, and some of the planning you had quite a lot of, um, quite a lot of worksheets, quite a lot of activities and for 45 minute sessions it was too short, it was too short to get anywhere near completing them all and they had to be adapted quite stringently.

Interviewer: Okay, alright. Do you have any questions at the moment?

Stanley: No.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you so much then for your time Stanley.

Stanley: It's alright.

[End of recorded material]

Unhelpful classroom environment.

Duration of the sessions.

Worksheets hard for pupils.

Too short sessions and a lot to be covered - inadequate time.

Appendix 12: Snapshots of the stages of the thematic analysis

The codes



Initial grouping of the codes in subthemes



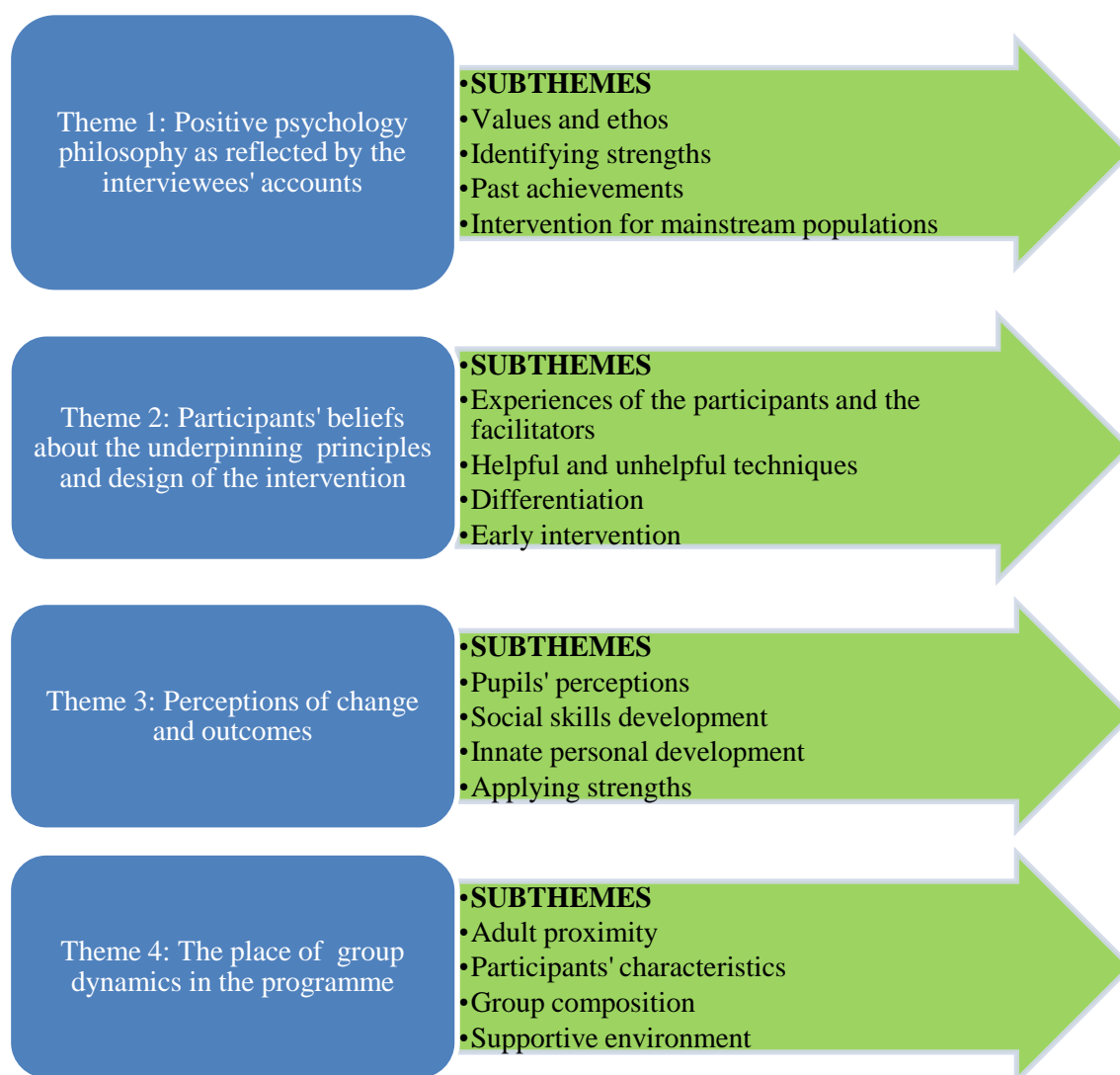
Final grouping of the codes in subthemes



Initial grouping of the subthemes into themes



Final version of the themes and subthemes



Appendix 13: CD of the coded transcripts

Appendix 14: Raw statistical data from SPSS

Thesis dataset_1.sav [DataSet1] - IBM SPSS Statistics Data Editor

Visible: 187 of 187 Variables

44: SE1.3	VAR000...	VAR00187	LS1.1	LS1.2	LS1.3	LS1.4	LS1.5	LS1.6	LS1	ggg	Attendance1	SE1.1	SE1.2	SE1.3	SE1
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2	CChr		5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00		92.67	4.00	1.00	3.00	
3	CRo		5.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	4.50		93.67	3.00	1.00	3.00	
4	CDa		5.00	5.00	4.00	3.00	5.00	5.00	4.50		99.33	4.00	2.00	2.00	
5	Clg		5.00	5.00	4.00	5.00	3.00	5.00	4.50		89.33	3.00	3.00	3.00	
6	CBi		5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00		99.67	4.00	3.00	3.00	
7	CEI		3.00	4.00	1.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	3.00		100.00	4.00	1.00	1.00	
8	CMi		2.00	5.00	3.00	2.00	3.00	2.00	2.83		96.67	2.00	1.00	2.00	
9	BHa		4.00	2.00	1.00	3.00	3.00	2.00	2.50		93.10	3.00	4.00	2.00	
10	BKs		5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00		97.95	4.00	3.00	3.00	
11	Blh		5.00	4.00	2.00	3.00	2.00	5.00	3.50		100.00	4.00	2.00	2.00	
12	Blg		4.00	4.00	5.00	3.00	5.00	4.00	4.17		97.60	3.00	1.00	3.00	
13	BAI		5.00	5.00	4.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.83		99.31	4.00	4.00	2.00	
14	BDo		4.00	5.00	2.00	5.00	5.00	4.00	4.17		87.67	2.00	1.00	4.00	
15	LAd		1.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	3.00	5.00	4.00		97.09	1.00	2.00	3.00	
16	LJz		4.00	4.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	4.17		91.26	3.00	1.00	3.00	
17	LTr		4.00	5.00	3.00	4.00	2.00	4.00	3.67		88.75	4.00	3.00	2.00	
18	LJsa		5.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.17		95.47	4.00	3.00	3.00	
19	LJc		5.00	5.00	2.00	3.00	5.00	3.00	3.83		90.29	3.00	1.00	1.00	
20															
21															
22															
23															

Data View Variable View

IBM SPSS Statistics Processor is ready Unicode ON

Thesis dataset_1.sav [DataSet1] - IBM SPSS Statistics Data Editor

Visible: 187 of 187 Variables

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6	1.00	1.00	.00	1.00	.00	.00	1.00	.00	1.00	1.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	1.00	
7	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	.00	.00	1.00	.00	1.00	1.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	2.00	
8	1.00	2.00	.00	1.00	1.00	.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	.00	.00	.00	1.00	2.00	
9	2.00	.00	.00	2.00	.00	1.00	.00	1.00	2.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	1.00	.00	
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11	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	1.00	.00	.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	.00	1.00	2.00	
12	.00	1.00	.00	.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	
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16	1.00	2.00	.00	.00	1.00	.00	2.00	1.00	.00	2.00	.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	
17	2.00	1.00	.00	1.00	2.00	.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	.00	.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	
18	2.00	.00	.00	1.00	.00	.00	.00	1.00	2.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	
19	2.00	1.00	.00	1.00	2.00	.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	
20																
21																
22																

Data View Variable View

IBM SPSS Statistics Processor is ready Unicode ON

Thesis dataset_1.sav [DataSet1] - IBM SPSS Statistics Data Editor

Visible: 187 of 187 Variables

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3		21.00			2.00	10.00	7.00	2.00	5.00			7.00			1.00		
4		14.00			3.00	5.00	5.00	1.00	6.00			7.00			1.00		
5		12.00			1.00	4.00	5.00	2.00	7.00			7.00			1.00		
6		6.00			.00	1.00	5.00	.00	5.00			7.00			.00		
7		11.00			1.00	3.00	6.00	1.00	5.00			7.00			.00		
8		7.00			.00	2.00	5.00	.00	8.00			7.00			.00		
9		8.00			3.00	1.00	.00	4.00	10.00			9.00			.00		
10		4.00			.00	.00	4.00	.00	8.00			7.00			.00		
11		13.00			1.00	3.00	5.00	4.00	4.00			7.00			1.00		
12		27.00			5.00	7.00	8.00	7.00	3.00			7.00			1.00		
13		3.00			.00	.00	2.00	1.00	10.00			7.00			.00		
14		17.00			.00	5.00	8.00	4.00	5.00			7.00			1.00		
15		31.00			10.00	8.00	10.00	3.00	4.00			7.00			1.00		
16		22.00			4.00	5.00	10.00	3.00	3.00			7.00			1.00		
17		17.00			6.00	3.00	5.00	3.00	7.00			8.00			1.00		
18		9.00			3.00	1.00	1.00	4.00	9.00			7.00			.00		
19		21.00			3.00	5.00	8.00	5.00	4.00			8.00			1.00		
20																	
21																	
22																	

Data View Variable View

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